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Studies on the composition of Niketas Choniates' Historia

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**STUDIES ON THE COMPOSITION OF
NIKETAS CHONIATES' *HISTORIA***

by

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



ABSTRACT

Niketas Choniates' *Historia* or *Chronike Diegesis* is the major source for the crucial time period in the history of the Byzantine Empire that begins with the death of Alexios I Komnenos in 1118 and culminates with the capture of Constantinople by the armies of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Despite the fact that the text has, for over a century, dominated all modern presentations of this entire era of Byzantine history, as yet no systematic study of the *Historia* has been undertaken.

The present study attempts to fill this void by producing a work dedicated to the *Historia*, and more specifically, one that looks closely at the process of its composition. As every history requires a historian, Niketas' text cannot possibly be understood without taking into account its author and the time and circumstances of its creation. The *Historia* has been preserved in two main versions: an original shorter version written prior to 1204 designated as b(revior); and a longer, revised version written after 1204 known as a(uctior). These are dated, described, compared and analysed with the ultimate aim of understanding the discrepancies between them. Authorial purpose and different circumstances at each distinctive phase of the composition provide an explanation for Niketas' reconstruction and interpretation of the past both before and after the calamitous events of 1204.

Any attempt to reach a novel and critical understanding of the *Historia* inevitably involves an examination of the methodology followed by its author as well as the sources from which he compiled his account. Looking beyond authorial purpose, the overall structure, presentation and emphasis of the text can be understood in terms of the inner operative principles and techniques followed by Niketas Choniates. In turn, these principles and techniques, which can ultimately be traced to Greco-Roman historiographical tradition, are utilised in an attempt to understand the complex mechanism of historical causation and argumentation in the text. Finally, the textual transmission, reception, and readership of the text are discussed with the aim of assessing its influence and significance in the last centuries of Byzantium.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND CITATION

On the transliteration of Greek names and terms, I have employed an orthographic system, which renders them nearest to their original equivalents as opposed to the Latinised and English forms (e.g. *Komnenos* for *Comnenus*, *Isaakios* for *Isaac*). However, those terms which have acquired a standard English spelling are not rendered in their original phonetic equivalents (e.g. *Constantine* for *Konstantinos*, *Nicaea* for *Nikaia*). All translations of Niketas Choniates as well as other Byzantine authors are my own, except in the cases of John Kinnamos and Eustathios of Thessaloniki, where I have cited from the English translations. When comparing the longer passages of the different versions of Niketas, I have provided an English translation of both versions in the text, and the Greek text of the earlier version b(revior) in the footnotes. For the Greek text of later version a(uctior), refer to Appendix II and the main text of the edition of Jan Louis van Dieten. When comparing individual words, phrases and short sentences between the two versions, a translation into English is not helpful, as such a comparison often entails stylistic variations and grammatical changes that cannot be seen in translation. Therefore in these cases, I have decided to cite only the Greek so as to illustrate clearly the process of successive revision. The same is true when comparing phrases and short sentences of Niketas Choniates with other authors so as to demonstrate the ways in which he utilized his sources and the ways in which Niketas Choniates (in the different versions of his text) was in turn utilized by later writers. In these cases also, I have cited only the Greek.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SHORT TITLES

1. Periodicals

<i>AB</i>	Analecta Bollandiana
<i>AI</i>	Ἀρχεῖον Πόντου
<i>BF</i>	Byzantinische Forschungen
<i>BMGS</i>	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
<i>BNJ</i>	Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher
<i>BSI</i>	Byzantinoslavica
<i>Byz</i>	Byzantion
<i>Βυζ</i>	Βυζαντινά
<i>BZ</i>	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
<i>DOP</i>	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
<i>ΕΕΒΣ</i>	Ἑπετηρὶς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν
<i>JHS</i>	Journal of Hellenic Studies
<i>JMH</i>	Journal of Medieval History
<i>JÖB</i>	Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik (Before 1969 <i>JÖBG</i>)
<i>NE</i>	Νέος Ἑλληνομνημῶν
<i>REB</i>	Revue des études byzantines
<i>REG</i>	Revue des études grecques
<i>Σύμμ</i>	Σύμμεικτα
<i>TM</i>	Travaux et memoires
<i>WBS</i>	Wiener byzantinische Studien
<i>WSt</i>	Wiener Studien
<i>ZRVI</i>	Zbornik Radova-Vizantinoloski Institut

2. Sources

Akropolites	<i>Georgii Acropolitae Opera</i> , ed. A. Heisenberg, I, Leipzig 1903
Anna Komnene	Anne Comnène, <i>Alexiade (Règne de l'empereur Alexis I Comnène 1081-</i>

	1118), ed. & trans. B. Leib, I-III, Paris 1937-45 (repr. 1967)
Attaleiates	<i>Michaelis Attaliothae historia</i> , ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonn 1853
CFHB	<i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i>
CSHB	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</i>
Dölger-Wirth, <i>Regesten</i>	<i>Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des östlichen Reiches von 565-1453</i> , bearbeitet von F. Dölger. 2 Teil von 1025-1204. Zweite, erweiterte und verbesserte von P. Wirth, Munich 1995
Ephraim	<i>Ephraem Aenii Historia Chronica</i> , ed. O. Lampsides, CFHB, Athens 1990
Eustathios of Thessaloniki, <i>The Capture of Thessaloniki</i>	Eustathios of Thessaloniki, <i>The Capture of Thessaloniki</i> , trans. J. Melville-Jones, (Byzantina Australiensia, 8), Canberra 1988
Kinnamos	John Kinnamos, <i>Ἐπιτομή...</i> ed. A. Meineke, CSHB, Bonn 1836 (Engl. trans. C.M. Brand, <i>The Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus</i> , New York 1976)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Michael Choniates	Michael Choniates, <i>Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ σωζόμενα</i> , ed. S. Lampros, I-II, Athens 1879-80 (repr. 1968)
Michael Psellos	<i>Michel Psellos chronographie</i> , ed. E. Renauld, I-II, Paris 1928 (rep. 1967)
MM	F. Miklosisch and J. Müller, <i>Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi</i> , 6 vols, Vienna 1860-90
Nik.Chon.	<i>Nicetae Choniatae historia</i> , ed. J.-L. van Dieten, 2 vols, CFHB, Berlin-New York

	1975 (Engl. trans. H. Magoulias, <i>O city of Byzantium: annals of Niketas Choniates</i> , Detroit 1984)
<i>Orationes et epistulae</i>	<i>Nicetae Choniatae, orationes et epistulae</i> , ed. J.-L. van Dieten, CFHB, Berlin-New York 1972
<i>Panoplia Dogmatike</i> (ed. van Dieten)	J.-L. van Dieten, <i>Zur Überlieferung und Veröffentlichung der Panoplia Dogmatike des Niketas Choniates</i> , Amsterdam 1970
<i>Panoplia Dogmatike</i> (ed. Eustratiades)	<i>Panoplia Dogmatike</i> (Book 27), ed. S. Eustratiades in Michael Glykas, <i>Εἰς τὰς ἀπορίας τῆς Θεῆας Γραφῆς κεφάλαια</i> , I, Athens 1906
Paraphrase	<i>Η «Μετάφραση» της Χρονικής Διηγήσεως του Νικήτα Χωνιάτη</i> , ed. J. C. Davis (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Ioannina 2004)
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> , [...]. <i>Series Graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, I-CLXI, Paris 1857-1866
Skoutariotes	Theodore Skoutariotes, <i>Ἀνωνύμου Σύνοψις Χρονική</i> , ed. K. Sathas, <i>Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη</i> , VII, Venice 1894
TT	T.L.F Tafel and G.M. Thomas, <i>Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig mit besonderen Beziehungen auf Byzanz und die Levante</i> , 3 vols, Vienna 1856-57
Villehardouin	‘The Conquest of Constantinople’, in <i>Joinville and Villehardouin, Chronicles of the Crusades</i> , trans. M. R. B. Shaw,

William of Tyre
 Harmondsworth 1963, pp. 29-160
A History of Deeds done beyond the Sea,
 trans. E. A. Babcock & A. C. Krey, 2
 vols., New York 1943

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 Ai. Christophilopoulou, *Βυζαντινή
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DMA
 Dictionary of the Middle Ages, 13 vols.,
 New York 1982-89

DTC
 Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, 25
 vols., Paris 1909-1950

ΕΠΙΛΗΠΤΗ
 Εγκυκλοπαιδικό, Προσωπογραφικό
 Λεξικό Βυζαντινής Ιστορίας και
 Πολιτισμού, ed. A. Savvides, Athens
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 Niceta Coniata, *Grandezza e catastrofe di*

- cronologica*, I
- LMA*
- Lilie, 'Des Kaisers Macht'
- Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*
- Maisano, 'Varianti d'autore'
- Maisano, 'Letteratura e storiografia'
- ODB*
- Pontani, Commentary to *Narrazione cronologica*, II
- van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*
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- Bisanzio (narrazione cronologica)*, I, ed. R. Maisano, Scrittori greci e latini, 1994
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- K. Varzos, 'Η γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν', I-II, Thessaloniki 1984



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Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna

INTRODUCTION

History bears witness to the passing of the ages, sheds light upon reality, gives life to recollection, guidance to human existence and brings tidings of ancient days; whose voice but the orator's can entrust her to immortality?

Cicero

Niketas Choniates remains a shadowy and intriguing figure in the Byzantine literary tradition. A distinguished statesman, orator and theologian, Niketas was also perhaps the greatest of all Byzantine historians. While it is possible to read his history as though it conveys only the decline and fall of Byzantium in the twelfth century, this is by no means a faithful description of Niketas' work as a whole. Nevertheless, it does encapsulate the central theme of the narration. The capture of Constantinople in 1204 was a critical moment for Byzantium. It marked the most significant event in its history and paved the way for its final demise roughly two centuries later. Niketas is the only contemporary Byzantine historian to have recorded these events for posterity and the significance of his work is matched by his sophistication and stylistic brilliance. An eyewitness and participant of the events described, Niketas' own fate, no less than his history, is a reflection of the age.

Niketas was born in the provincial town of Chonai in Phrygia, renowned for its Church of the Archangel Michael and for the miracle attached to it.¹ The date of his birth has long been the subject of controversy among scholars, with various opinions ranging from as early as 1150 to as late as 1160.² The evidence derives mostly from the writings of Niketas and his older brother, Michael Choniates, metropolitan of Athens (1182-1204). The latter provides us with a precise *terminus post quem* of 1217 for the year of the historian's death,³ and can therefore assist us in estimating the date of his birth. Yet much confusion has arisen from the imprecise nature of the information available and from the rhetorical exaggeration that

¹ See W. M. Ramsay, *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia, being an Essay of the Local History of Phrygia from the Earliest Times to the Turkish Conquest*, I, Oxford 1895, p. 8ff.

² Lampros in Michael Choniates, II, pp. 540-41 ca. 1152; V. Grecu, 'Nicetas Choniates a-t-il connu l'histoire de Jean Kinnamos?', *REB* 7 (1949), p. 195 ca. 1160; G. Stadtmüller, 'Zur biographie des Niketas Choniates (um 1150- um 1215)', *BF* 1 (1966), p. 321 ca. 1150; van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 18-20, ca. 1155/57.

³ This has been securely established by V. Katsaros, 'A Contribution to the exact dating of the death of the Byzantine historian Nicetas Choniates', *JÖB* 32/3 (1982), pp. 83-91.

characterises any scattered references to age.⁴ There are, however, clear indications for favouring the later date for his birth. First, Niketas testifies that when he was forced to flee Constantinople in April 1204, his wife was pregnant and he carried on his shoulders his children who could not yet walk and a male infant in his arms.⁵ When he died, Michael mourned the premature death of his brother, who had not yet passed the threshold of old age and lamented the fate of Niketas' orphaned children who were still minors.⁶ Second, Niketas served as a subordinate tax official in the provinces before entering the ranks of the imperial administration in the position of undersecretary, which he held during the brief reign of Alexios II Komnenos (1180-83).⁷ It seems, therefore, logical to assume that Niketas was in his early twenties when he was enrolled as imperial undersecretary, his early forties when tragedy struck in 1204 and in his late fifties at the time of his untimely death in ca. 1217.

Very little is known of Niketas' family. His parents do not appear to have belonged to the aristocracy. Yet his father must have had a social standing of some importance in the provincial town of Chonai, for he had the financial means to send his sons to Constantinople.⁸ Moreover, Niketas, the bishop of Chonai, renowned for his gift of prophecy, was the historian's godfather.⁹ When Niketas was nine years old, he was sent to his older brother in Constantinople, who assumed responsibility for his education. Michael subsequently became father, nurturer and teacher to the young boy.¹⁰ Under his learned tutelage, Niketas studied grammar, rhetoric, poetry, philosophy, theology and other subjects that constituted the curriculum of the day.¹¹

⁴ In the *Monodia* composed on the occasion of Niketas' death, Michael tells us that he had come to Athens 'πρὸ δεκάδων ἐτῶν τριῶν καὶ ὑπερέκεινα', Michael Choniates, I, p. 357/25. Counting from Michael's arrival in Athens in 1182 (see Lampros' introduction, I, pp. ιζ' - ιθ') this can range anywhere from 1214 to 1217. A little later, Michael implies that Niketas was not an old man when he died: 'ὁ γεραίτερος τὸ νεωτέρῳ, ὁ ἐσχατογέρων ἤδη τῷ καθεστηκότι καὶ ὠμογέροντι' (359/11-12).

⁵ Nik.Chon. p. 588/35-37, 589/41.

⁶ Michael Choniates, I, p. 357/12: παιδίων ἀφηλίκων καὶ ἀνήβων and p. 359/23-25: ὁ δὲ οὐπω ἴκετο γήραος οὐδὲν, δικαιότερος δ' ἦν ἐπιβιώναι μακρότερον. See also Grecu, 'Nicetas Choniates', p. 195.

⁷ Michael Choniates, I, p. 347/19-21; van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 23. We do not know the precise year that Niketas entered imperial service. Michael only testifies that his brother held the position of undersecretary at the time of Alexios II's murder in 1183.

⁸ Presumably Michael and Niketas were the only sons of the family, for Michael only mentions the names of four nephews: George, Michael, Niketas and Theophylactos. For these as well as other identifiable members of the family see van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 8-15.

⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 219/95-96.

¹⁰ Michael Choniates, I, p. 347/24-25.

¹¹ Niketas does not speak of a particular school or teacher he was attached to, although he does refer to his classmates in rhetorical studies: Nik.Chon., p. 594/79-80. He also wrote a funeral oration for Theodore Trochos, a former classmate and colleague in the administration: *Orationes et epistulae*, pp.

Whereas Michael, the first-born of the family, had been set apart to serve in the Church, Niketas was destined to embark on a career in the administration. Michael takes credit for introducing his brother to persons of political influence. Thereafter, 'luck' played a considerable part in his advancement.¹²

Niketas began his career before Michael left Constantinople to become metropolitan of Athens in 1182. He first served as a subordinate tax official in the provinces, having spent some time in Paphlagonia.¹³ At an unspecified date, Niketas returned to the capital, whereupon he was enlisted to serve in the imperial administration. When Andronikos I Komnenos took over as sole ruler of the empire in September 1183, Niketas held the position of imperial undersecretary (βασιλικὸς ὑπογραμματεὺς).¹⁴ During the reign of Andronikos (1183-85), Niketas lost his position in the imperial administration, to return once again with the accession of Isaakios II Angelos in September 1185.¹⁵ During that time, he devoted himself to the study of law.¹⁶ Under Isaakios Angelos, Niketas first held the position of imperial secretary (βασιλικὸς γραμματικὸς)¹⁷, and thereafter rose quickly through the ranks of the administration, occupying positions that mostly involved judicial and fiscal functions. His rhetorical talent was soon recognised, and he was given the honour of

13-25. Michael claims that he himself was responsible for Niketas' education. Michael Choniates, I, p. 348/19-20: ἐγὼ μὲν παρὰ διδασκάλων καὶ πρὸς τὰ πρεσβύτερα τῶν μαθημάτων παραβαλλόμενος, ὁ δὲ παρ' ἐμοῦ καὶ καθ' ὅσον τὸ τῆς ἡλικίας μέτρον ἐχώρει νεοττοτροφούμενος ἀεὶ πρὸς τὸ τελεώτερον καὶ ἡρέμα πτερούμενος. ἕως διὰ τε τῶν ἐγκλυκίων καὶ τῇ σοφιστικῇς κουφισθεὶς οἷος τε ἦν κάπνι τὰ μετέωρα καὶ σεμνότερα θεωρήματα φέρεσθαι. Concerning the influence of Eustathios of Thessaloniki (evident mostly in Niketas' choice of vocabulary), van Dieten has convincingly argued that Michael was the 'mediator' of that influence: van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 21.

¹² Michael Choniates, I, p. 349/7-16; van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 23.

¹³ Michael Choniates, II, p. 7/19. Less secure is the claim of G. Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates. Metropolit von Athen (ca. 1138- ca. 1222)*, Rome 1934, pp. 238-39 that Niketas served as tax official in the region of the Pontos under a certain Constantine Pegonites.

¹⁴ Michael Choniates, I, p. 349/19-21. For this office see comments of L. Bréhier, *Le Monde byzantin II: Les Institutions de l'empire Byzantin*, Paris 1949, pp. 166-67: 'en général un jeune homme de condition modeste et sans fonction officielle à l'origine, mais dont le service était presque toujours le point de départ d'une belle carrière... Les secrétaires écrivaient sous la dictée de l'empereur le texte des lettres imperiales, parfois confidentielles, et il y avait même parmi eux des tachygraphes, habiles à saisir au vol la parole du maître.

¹⁵ Michael Choniates, I, p. 349/26ff. It is difficult to believe Michael's assertion that Niketas voluntarily withdrew from the palace in protest of Andronikos' tyrannical regime. It is not, of course, coincidental that John and Michael Belissariotes, Niketas' closest friends and colleagues also lost their positions at that time. See Michael Choniates, II, pp. 58-59.

¹⁶ Michael Choniates, I, p. 350/4-9.

¹⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 397/6-12; *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 6 (in the title of the communication to the patriarch and the Holy Synod in 1187, Niketas is identified as imperial secretary).

delivering an oration on the occasion of Isaakios' marriage to Margaret-Maria, the daughter of King Bela III of Hungary, at about the end of 1185.¹⁸

At around that time, Niketas married the sister of John and Michael Belissariotes, his close friends and colleagues in the administration.¹⁹ In about 1188 he was promoted to the post of chamberlain of the public treasury (προεστὼς τοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν κοινῶν χρημάτων κοιτῶνος).²⁰ By the end of the twelfth century the office of grand chamberlain had diminished considerably in importance. However, Niketas' duties probably still included the supervision of the income derived from taxation and state domains and its expenditure on various public works, salaries of state officials and the like.²¹ Thereafter, Niketas was repeatedly sent to the provinces to carry out various administrative duties.²² Indeed, in 1189 we find the historian in the high-ranking position of governor (ἀρμοστής) of the cities of Thrace and paymaster of the troops stationed there.²³ Niketas himself testifies that he was governor of the theme of Philippopolis and responsible for the collection of taxes.²⁴ His duties included both civil and military functions, for Niketas was also responsible for the defending the province against the crusading armies of the German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa (1152-90).²⁵ Shortly after the passage of the Third Crusade, Niketas was summoned back to the capital.

In 1190 he delivered a panegyric on the Feast of Epiphany in the absence of an official orator.²⁶ The title of that oration refers to Niketas as λογοθετικὸς γραμματικός. It is difficult to define the functions of this post, but Niketas' editor, Jan Louis van Dieten has suggested that it may have been an official in the service of

¹⁸ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 35-44.

¹⁹ van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 25.

²⁰ As evidenced by the title of Niketas' funeral oration to Theodore Trochos: *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 13-25 and an unpublished passage of the *Panoplia Dogmatike* given by van Dieten: *Biographie*, p. 27 (ἐνέτυχον δ' αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ ταμείῳ τῶν βασιλικῶν χρημάτων τῷ καὶ κοιτῶνι καλουμένῳ, οὗ προιστάμην, βίβλω παλαιᾷ).

²¹ See F. Dölger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig 1927 (repr. 1960), p. 25; J. E. Dunlap, 'The Office of the Grand Chamberlain in the Later Roman and Byzantine Empire', *Two Studies in the Later Roman and Byzantine Administration*, (eds.), A. E. R. Boar & J. E. Dunlap, New York 1924, II; van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 27-28, n. 29.

²² Michael Choniates, I, p. 350/14-16.

²³ Michael Choniates, I, p. 350/14-16.

²⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 402/50-51.

²⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 401/19ff. (for Niketas' narration of the Third Crusade). For the post of governor see: H. Ahrweiler, 'Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantin au IX-XI siècles', *Bulletin de Correspondence hellénique* 84 (1960), p. 36ff. (repr. Idem, *Études sur les structures administratives et sociales de Byzance*, London 1971, no. VIII).

²⁶ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 85-100.

the *logothetes tou dromou* (λογοθέτης τοῦ δρόμου), at that time Demetrios Tornikes, a friend of the Choniates brothers.²⁷ In any case, Niketas did not remain long in that position, for it seems that Isaakios decided to take advantage of his expert knowledge in law. In 1190/91 Niketas was appointed judge of the velum (κριτῆς τοῦ βήλου), one of the chief judicial officials of the empire.²⁸ Together with that office, Niketas was also appointed ἑφορος. This later post could either mean that Niketas was put in charge of the land registers or of the imperial domains and household.²⁹ In 1194/95 we find Niketas in the post of ἐπὶ τῶν κρίσεων, the chief official presiding over a tribunal which dealt with civil law suits.³⁰ Thereafter, Niketas seems to have been promoted to a financial post, as evidenced by the titles appearing in his historical work, as well as in his theological discourse, *Panoplia Dogmatike*. His title of γενικός may either refer to the office of λογοθέτης τοῦ γενικοῦ, the important official in charge of the public treasury, or γενικός λογιστῆς τῶν φόρων, an executive official of the public treasury responsible for the collection, supervision and inspection of taxes.³¹

The highest point in Niketas' career was reached when he was appointed *logothetes ton sekreton* (λογοθέτης τῶν σεκρέτων).³² According to Hans-Georg Beck, the earliest possible date that Niketas could have been appointed to this post is after the death of his predecessor John Kastamonites in ca. 1192.³³ A more precise

²⁷ van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 31-32. For the *logothetes tou dromou* see D. A. Miller, 'The Logothete of the Drome in the Middle Byzantine Period', *Byz* 36 (1966), pp. 438-70.

²⁸ K. E. Zachariä von Ligenthal, *Geschichte des griechische-römischen Rechtes*, Berlin 1892³ (repr. 1955), pp. 360-61; Bréhier, *Le Monde byzantin*, II, p. 227: 'Les juges du Voile étaient affectés au contentieux du protocole. Ils contrôlaient la formation des processions et se portaient arbitres des contestations auxquelles pouvaient donner lieu les questions de préséance.'

²⁹ van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 34.

³⁰ According to Zachariä von Ligenthal, *Geschichte des griechisch-römischen Rechtes*, pp. 374-75, Constantine Monomachos (1042-55) created a special judicial service to deal with civil law suits, the σέκρετον δικῶν ἰδιωτικῶν. This service, with offices throughout the empire, had the main responsibility of assisting the governors of the themes in their judicial duties. Niketas was one of the last officials to preside over this service, as it disappears after 1204.

³¹ For this post see R. Guiland, 'Les Logothètes: Études sur l'histoire administrative de l'empire byzantin', *REB* 1971, p. 11ff.

³² One of Niketas' orations to Isaakios II (dated to 1190/91) identifies the author as *logothetes ton sekreton*. However, this is the first oration (but not the earliest in date) that appears in Niketas' collection and given the fact that Byzantine authors tended to place all their acquired titles on the first page, we cannot possibly tell whether Niketas was actually *logothetes ton sekreton* at the time the speech was delivered. See the remarks of van Dieten: *Biographie*, p. 34, n. 44.

³³ H.-G. Beck, 'Der byzantinische Ministerpräsident', *BZ* 48 (1955), p. 325. For the date of Kastamonites' death see Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates*, pp. 229, 247; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, p. 341 n. 55: claims that Kastamonites was still alive in 1192, but died shortly afterwards; Varzos, II, p. 810, n. 18β, 813, n. 30-32. For prosopographical information see V. Katsaros, *Ιωάννης Κασταμονίτης. Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου, του έργου και της εποχής του*, Thessaloniki 1998, pp. 140-43.

date was offered by van Dieten, who argued that Niketas became *logothetes ton sekreton* around the middle years of 1190s, and further added that he probably received this office from Isaakios II Angelos and not his successor Alexios III Angelos, who ascended the throne by a coup d'état in April 1195.³⁴ Neither supposition appears to be correct. In a letter dated to 1194/95, Michael refers to Niketas' brother-in-law, John Belissariotes as *megas logothetes*.³⁵ In an official document dated to 1196, Belissariotes is designated as *logothetes ton sekreton* and *megas logariastes*.³⁶ At the end of the twelfth century the titles *megas logothetes* and *logothetes ton sekreton* were synonymous.³⁷ Therefore, John Belissariotes, and not Niketas, was Kastamonites' immediate successor to the post. Moreover, in two official documents of November 1197, Belissariotes is no longer *logothetes ton sekreton*, but designated only by the title *megas logariastes*.³⁸ It is thus likely that Alexios III Angelos promoted Niketas to the post of *logothetes ton sekreton* in 1196/97. The historian retained his position until dismissed by Alexios V Doukas Mourtzouphlos in 1204.³⁹

Theoretically speaking, this office placed Niketas in charge of the entire civil service and situated him at the head of the senate.⁴⁰ Practically, we have no information whatsoever on the duties and responsibilities of our historian in the administration of Alexios III during the final decade before the Latin conquest. On the one hand it seems that Niketas did not exert much influence during those days, as is clearly indicated by his continual complaints regarding the immense power wielded

³⁴ van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 38-39.

³⁵ Michael Choniates, II, pp. 88-89.

³⁶ *Actes de Lavra*, ed. P. Lemerle et al., I, Paris 1970, nos. 67-68; P. Lemerle, 'Notes sur l'administration byzantine à la veille de la IV^e croisade d'après deux documents inédites des archives de Lavra', *REB* 19 (1961), p. 259 (repr. in idem, *Le monde de Byzance: Histoire et Institutions*, London 1978).

³⁷ van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 37, n. 48. In the variant readings of the manuscripts of his historical work, Niketas is referred to in the title as both *logothetes ton sekreton* and *megas logothetes* (Nik.Chon., p. 1/1-3). In the title of the *Panoplia Dogmatike* we find the combination *megas logothetes ton sekreton*. Niketas' predecessor, John Kastamonites is the first *logothetes ton sekreton* to be referred to also by the title of *megas logothetes*. Thereafter, John Belissariotes, who held the post after Kastamonites, is referred to by both titles. See Guillard, 'Les Logothètes', pp. 79-84.

³⁸ MM, VI, pp. 139-41.

³⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 565/12-15.

⁴⁰ For the wide-ranging administrative duties of this post see C. Diehl, 'Un haut fonctionnaire byzantin: Le logothète (τῶν σεκρέτων)', *Mélanges N. Iorga*, Paris 1933, pp. 212-27; Guillard, 'Les Logothètes', pp. 75-84; N. Oikonomidès, 'L' evolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantin au XI^e siècle (1025-1118)', *TM* 6 (1976), pp. 132-33 (repr. in idem, *Byzantium from the Ninth century to the Fourth Crusade*, Aldershot 1992); P. Magdalino, 'Justice and Finance in the Byzantine State, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries', in *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth-Twelfth centuries*, ed. D. Simon & A. Laiou, Washington DC, 1994, p. 110ff. Niketas himself tells us that he was head of the senate (Nik.Chon., 565/12-15).

by the favourites and relatives of the emperor. But it may also have been the case that Niketas wished to play down his role in the administration, for although he informs us of the various functions he performed for Isaakios Angelos, he is completely silent about his position and responsibilities in the regime of Alexios III.⁴¹

The traumatic events of 1203 and 1204 brought dramatic changes to Niketas' life. The catastrophic fire of 19-21 August 1203 destroyed Niketas' palatial home in the Sphorakion district.⁴² The usurpation of Alexios V Doukas Mourtzouphlos in January 1204 brought an abrupt end to his career, although he continued to serve as a member of the senate until the capture of the city.⁴³ When Constantinople was taken and sacked in April 1204, Niketas and his family narrowly escaped capture. Having first sought refuge in the second of his homes, located close to the vicinity of Hagia Sophia, they were then taken into the home of a Venetian friend, who had come to the rescue of the family. But it was clear that they could not remain hidden for long, so on 17 April, five days after the fall of the city, Niketas and his family fled to Selymbria, where they remained until June 1206.⁴⁴ At that time, they were forced to flee once again, this time due to the devastating incursions of the Cumans. After a six-month stay in Constantinople (July-December 1206), Niketas migrated to the Byzantine court in exile in Nicaea, where he hoped to enter the service of the new emperor, Theodore I Laskaris (1205-22).⁴⁵

Niketas' situation did not improve in Nicaea. By his own testimony, he and his family were forced to reside, along with other refugees, in overcrowded churches and wooden shacks alongside Lake Askania.⁴⁶ For a while it must have looked as though things were looking up. Niketas delivered a number of orations at the court of Theodore Laskaris,⁴⁷ and also entered the service of the *protovestiaros* (possibly John Vatatzes), although the duties he performed for this individual are unknown to us.⁴⁸

⁴¹ See comments of van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 38-39. The reason for this will be discussed in the following chapter.

⁴² Nik.Chon., 587/4-6. Niketas' home was a three-storied building decorated with gold mosaics (for the description see *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 166/25-28).

⁴³ Nik.Chon., p. 561/33ff.

⁴⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 587/1ff.

⁴⁵ See van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 42-46.

⁴⁶ Nik.Chon., pp. 635/1ff, 645/80-83. Also preface to *Panoplia Dogmatike*, (ed. van Dieten), p.57/16-19.

⁴⁷ *Orationes et epistulae*, no. 13, pp. 120-28, no. 14, pp. 128-46, no. 16, pp. 170-75, no. 17, pp. 176-84.

⁴⁸ van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 178; *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 211. The unnamed *protovestiaros* can perhaps be identified with John Vatatzes, later emperor (1222-1254). According to Akropolites (p. 26/10ff.), after the death of the *despotes* Andronikos Palaiologos, John Doukas Vatatzes was summoned from Didymoteichon to Nicaea, where Theodore Laskaris awarded him with the office of

Yet the family remained poverty-stricken and Niketas repeatedly complains that they were actually on the brink of starvation.⁴⁹ It is thus clear that our historian was not appointed to any office in the new government and his hopes for a brighter future in Nicaea never materialised.⁵⁰ It seems that he was overlooked by the emperor and neglected by powerful friends, such as Basil Kamateros, Constantine Mesopotamites and Theodore Eirenikos.⁵¹ He died in obscurity, still labouring to complete the final draft of his history.

Niketas was a talented and versatile writer. In Nicaea he completed his other major work, the *Panoplia Dogmatike*.⁵² This vast theological compilation, which has yet to be published in its entirety, was certainly a work written upon commission and not a personal endeavour of the author.⁵³ Yet considering the amount of space that Niketas devotes to theological controversies and questions of dogma in his historical work, it is clear that the historian himself was deeply interested in such issues.⁵⁴ Written in a total of twenty-seven books, the *Panoplia Dogmatike* is less concerned with Christian dogma and more so with a general refutation of heresy. The author clearly follows in the footsteps of his predecessors, Euthymios Zygabenos (*Panoplia Dogmatike*) and Andronikos Kamateros (*Sacred Arsenal*),⁵⁵ but also attempts to offer a more comprehensive and detailed account of the various heresies and theological controversies that plagued the Byzantine world throughout its existence. The work begins with a refutation of paganism and Judaism and continues with the errors of the Arians, the Nestorians, the Monophysites, the Iconoclasts, the Bogomils, the Turks,

protovestiarios. Niketas says that as soon as the *protovestiarios* arrived in Nicaea, he (Niketas) was taken into his service, performing whatever duties the *protovestiarios* requested.

⁴⁹ See especially preface to the *Panoplia Dogmatike*, (ed. van Dieten), pp. 56-57.

⁵⁰ Stadtmüller, 'Niketas Choniates', p. 325; van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 48.

⁵¹ van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 49.

⁵² PG 139, cols. 1101-1449, 140, cols. 9-281.

⁵³ In the preface of the work Niketas tells us that the work was written upon the request of a friend (*Panoplia Dogmatike*, (ed. van Dieten), p. 57/20: ὁ δὲ με πολλάκις ἤτησας, τοῦτο καὶ δὴ ἀσπασίως παρέχω σοι, συλλογὴν ποιησάμενος πασῶν αἰρέσεων). Basil Kamateros, Theodore Laskaris' uncle and a major political figure in the early days of the Nicene Empire, may have been that anonymous friend. One of Niketas' letters to this individual served as a cover letter of a revision of book 17 of the *Panoplia Dogmatike*, perhaps sent to Kamateros for his approval. See F. Cavallera, 'Le Trésor de la Foi Orthodoxe de Nicétas Acominatos', *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique publié par l'Institut de Toulouse* 5 (1913), pp. 124-37. However, another possible candidate is Constantine Mesopotamites, Niketas' colleague in the administration of the Angeloi and later metropolitan of Thessaloniki (1196/97-1227). Mesopotamites was the owner of a manuscript containing the *Panoplia Dogmatike* and a version of Niketas' historiographical work. See R. Walter, *Gnomon* 50 (1978), p. 539 (review of J.-L. van Dieten's edition of the *Historia*).

⁵⁴ H. Magoulas, 'Doctrinal Disputes in the History of Niketas Choniates', *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 61987, pp. 199-226.

⁵⁵ On these works see H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, Munich 1959, pp. 614, 626-27.

the Latins, and so on.⁵⁶ Especially significant are the last five books dedicated to the theological controversies of the second half of the twelfth century.⁵⁷

Niketas was also an accomplished orator. His panegyrics for the emperors Isaakios II, Alexios II, and Theodore I can be described as rhetorical showpieces defined by complex, subtle and profound prose units of variable length, impressive formulations, continual antitheses, and the creative use of allusions.⁵⁸ Moreover, they constitute an important source of information for contemporary politics, and when used in conjunction with Niketas' historical work, can help us to understand the historian's purpose as well as his working method. Of Niketas' other works there survive funeral orations for colleagues and friends and also for his son, an invective speech against the *chartophylax* of the Haghia Sophia, John Kamateros (later patriarch John X 1198-1206), a poem written on the occasion of the marriage of Isaakios II Angelos with Margaret-Maria of Hungary, a comparison of winter and summer, as well as several letters written by the historian during his sojourn in Nicaea after 1206. Our knowledge of Niketas' life after the fall of Constantinople mostly derives from his correspondence.

Niketas has been largely and inexplicably overlooked by modern scholars, and this is especially true of historians. The most significant work on the author to date has been carried out by philologists, namely Jan Louis van Dieten, Riccardo Maisano and more recently Anna Pontani. Jan Louis van Dieten has, of course, given us the current and only complete critical edition of Niketas' *Historia*, a critical edition of Niketas' orations as well as his correspondence, a detailed biography of Niketas' life along with a study of his orations and letters, and finally, a separate study on the textual tradition of the *Panoplia Dogmatike*.⁵⁹ Riccardo Maisano, who undertook the first volume of a new critical edition of Niketas (*Narrazione cronologica*), has contributed significantly to our understanding of the literary aspects of Niketas' historical work and their influence on the narrative, as well as written on the various

⁵⁶ L. Petit, 'Acominatos Nicétas', *DTC* 1.1, col. 317.

⁵⁷ *Panoplia Dogmatike*, (ed. Eustratiades), pp. κ'-μ'. See also M. Jugie, 'La Messe dans l'Eglise Byzantine après le XI^e siècle', *DTC*, 10.2, cols. 1339-43.

⁵⁸ On Niketas speeches see the critical edition of van Dieten, *Orationes et epistulae* and his dating and analysis in Idem, *Biographie*, p. 58ff. For Niketas as an orator see F. Grabler, 'Niketas Choniates als Redner', *JÖBG* 11-13 (1962-64), pp. 57-78.

⁵⁹ On Niketas' life: van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 1-55. On the *Panoplia Dogmatike*: (ed. van Dieten), *Panoplia Dogmatike* and also Idem, 'Zur Überlieferung der *Panoplia Dogmatike* des Niketas Choniates. Codex Parisinus Graecus 1234', in *Polychronion. Festschrift für Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, I, Heidelberg 1966, pp. 166-80.

problems of the complicated textual tradition of the *Historia*.⁶⁰ Anna Pontani, along with Jan Louis van Dieten, has given us the second volume of *Narrazione cronologica*, with an exhaustive and impressive commentary.⁶¹

However, much of our understanding of Niketas as a writer stems from the pen of the historian Alexander Kazhdan. Especially significant is his introduction to the first volume of *Narrazione cronologica* as well as his massive *Concordance to Nicetas Choniates's History*.⁶² One must also acknowledge the earlier contributions of Franz Grabler, who undertook a German translation of Niketas' history (with an excellent introduction on Niketas as a writer) as well as his orations and correspondence and wrote several important articles on the literary aspects of Niketas' work.⁶³ Finally, the English translation of the *Historia* by Harry Magoulias,⁶⁴ whatever its inadequacies,⁶⁵ has played a significant role in introducing Niketas' work to students of Byzantine and Medieval history who are not familiar with Greek.

As is clear from the brief synopsis given above, modern scholarship has so far focused on publications, translations, and commentaries of Niketas' work, while most discussions have been overwhelmingly concerned with the literary aspects of his writings.⁶⁶ As important and useful as these contributions no doubt are, many historical questions remain unanswered. Yet the monumental significance of Niketas' work lies primarily in the field of history, for as is well known, it is the author's own interpretation of Byzantine history that has exerted a catalytic influence virtually on all modern presentations. In the case of Niketas we face the problem of the

⁶⁰ See especially Maisano, 'Letteratura e storiografia'; Idem, 'Varianti d'autore'.

⁶¹ Pontani, Commentary to *Narrazione cronologica*, II, pp. 545-784.

⁶² Kazhdan, Introduction to *Narrazione cronologica*, I, pp. IX-LV. Also A. Kazhdan & S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Cambridge 1984, no. VI (Nicetas Choniates and others: Aspects of the art of literature); A. Kazhdan, *La produzione intellettuale a Bizanzio. Libri e scrittori in una società colta*, Naples 1983, pp. 91-128 (Fisionomia dell' intellettuale: Niceta Coniata).

⁶³ German translation of the history in three volumes: I. *Die Krone der Komnenen (1118-1180)*- II. *Abenteurer auf dem Kaiserthron (1180-1195)*- III. *Die Kreuzfahrer erobern Konstantinopel (1195-1206)*, Graz-Vienna-Cologne 1958 (Byzantinische Geshichtsschreiber, 7-9). Translation of the orations: F. Grabler, *Kaisertaten und Menschenschicksale* (Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber, 11), Graz 1966 and Idem, 'Niketas Choniates als Redner', pp. 57-78.

⁶⁴ *O city of Byzantium. The annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. H. Magoulias, Detroit 1984.

⁶⁵ See especially the review of J.-L van Dieten in *BZ* (1986), pp. 50-52.

⁶⁶ A notable exception to this is Paul Magdalino's *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143-1180* – a work that essentially challenges modern interpretations of the period based primarily on Niketas. See especially Magdalino's introduction: pp. 1-19. Also the recent articles of Jonathan Harris focusing on historical causation in the work of Niketas: J. Harris, 'Distortion, divine providence and genre in Nicetas Choniates's account of the collapse of Byzantium 1180-1204', *JMH* 26 (2000), pp. 19-31; Idem, 'Looking back on 1204: Nicetas Choniates in Nicaea', *Mésogeios* 12 (2001), pp. 117-24.

dominance of a single author for the reconstruction of an important time period. His historical work is our major narrative source for the crucial era in Byzantine history that begins with the death of Alexios I Komnenos in 1118 and culminates with the capture of Constantinople by the armies of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Yet while the significance of Niketas' text as a source has been widely recognised, the author himself has been notoriously neglected, and as a consequence often misunderstood. More specifically, mistakes and misconceptions have arisen from taking material out of context, assuming impartiality, completely disregarding authorial purpose, and simply ignoring the methods and techniques that lay beneath Niketas' representation of historical reality.

As yet no systematic investigation of the author's historical work has been undertaken. The present study attempts to fill this void by producing such a work on the *Historia*, and more specifically, one that looks closely at the process of its composition. The facts contained in Niketas' *Historia* do not exist independently of the selection and interpretation of the historian. The choice of narrative episodes, the structure of the text, its literary presentation and emphasis along with the historical assessment of events and personalities all reflect Niketas' own values and interests. It thus follows that in order to understand the history, we must first understand the historian.⁶⁷ In accordance with this principle, the thesis addresses the following issues: 1) Dating and circumstances of composition of the text; 2) Patterns, motifs and purposes in Niketas' writing; 3) Argumentation and historical causation; 4) Sources and methodology; 5) Textual transmission and readership.

The ultimate aim is not an assessment of the value the work, its reliability or objectivity as a historical source. Neither is it to pass judgement on Niketas Choniates as a historian. Rather, it is to reach a novel and critical understanding of the author and the work he produced. This, it is hoped, will lead to a better understanding and deeper appreciation of the events he narrated.

⁶⁷ In following this approach, I am in complete agreement with the late Jacob Ljubarskij, who emphasized the importance of the role of the 'author' in any given work of historiography: J. N. Ljubarskij, 'Quellenforschung and/or Literary Criticism. Narrative Structures in Byzantine Historical Writings', *Symbolae Osloenses* 73 (1998), pp. 5-19.

CHAPTER I

DATING AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF COMPOSITION OF THE *HISTORIA*

One of the major problems still confronting scholarship is the precise dating of the text of the *Historia* and the circumstances of its composition. This can hardly remain overlooked, for before using any text as a historical source, some attempt should be made to arrive at the nearest precise date of composition and uncover the circumstances – and thus the purpose behind its undertaking. In Niketas' case this has proved a difficult task due to a number of considerations. First, the manuscripts in which the *Historia* has been preserved offer us no assistance in dating the text with precision. The autograph copy of the author has not survived and although we possess a significant number of codices chronologically close to the time of the author (i.e. of the thirteenth century), these cannot be dated more specifically. Thus the text can only be dated by internal evidence. This presents us with a number of problems.

Foremost of these is the sheer length of the *Historia*, which covers a span of nearly one hundred years of detailed narrative (especially from book IV of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, ca. 1167) beginning with death of Alexios I Komnenos in 1118 and ending with the events of the Greek revolt against the Latins in 1206/07, although Niketas records certain isolated events occurring after this date.¹ When we consider the fact that our historian is for the most part recording events contemporary to his own lifetime, it is very difficult to pinpoint exactly when he began to work on the text. No less of a problem is Niketas' working method. Although the author utilizes both a thematic and a chronological structure, i.e. subdividing his work according to imperial reigns and usually (but by no means always) narrating events in a chronological order, perhaps for the purposes of cohesion and symmetry he also employs a geographical structure, separating his reports in accordance with the area treated. This can often lead to confusion within the chronological sequence and hinder efforts at establishing a

¹ The work is divided into nineteen books: I) John II Komnenos 1118-1143; II-VIII) Manuel I Komnenos 1143-1180; IX) Alexios II Komnenos 1180-1183; X-XI) Andronikos I Komnenos 1183-1185; XII-XIV) Isaakios II Angelos 1185-1195; XV-XVI) Alexios III Angelos 1195-1203; XVII) Isaakios II and Alexios IV Angelos 1203-1204; XVIII) Alexios V Doukas 1204; XIX) The events after the fall of Constantinople. For a description of the contents of each book see van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. VIII-XIX.

timetable for the composition. Niketas is, moreover, rather sparing in dates, which are applied rather inconsistently throughout the text. Precise dating of events (day, month, indiction and year) is rare and unpredictable, while dating by months is occasional and reserved for military campaigns. In fact, the historian is only consistent in telling us how many years a particular emperor reigned.²

His rather elusive and often downright obscure narrative style only serves to magnify the difficulties. For example, the author takes great pains to conceal the reigning emperor at the time of composition and in fact, refers to him only once and this in a passing comment to those ‘who reign up to the present’.³ No less perplexing is Niketas’ metaphorical use of certain terms. For our purposes, the important word *νῦν* in certain cases means quite literally ‘present time’, but in others is used in a rather ‘loose’ sense to indicate the long-lasting effects of a particular event, again quite possibly leading to a great deal of confusion.⁴ Finally, the instability of the political situation in the final decades of the twelfth/beginning of the thirteenth century and the relative lack of information concerning the author’s own circumstances are also problematic. The capture of Constantinople in 1204 and the virtual chaos that engulfed the territories of the empire, coupled with Niketas’ own precarious state in those troubled days, i.e. his sojourn in Selymbria – Constantinople – Nicaea, make it difficult to distinguish which sections were written when, and where.

In his pioneering work on Byzantine literature, which appeared at the close of the nineteenth century, Karl Krumbacher was the first to suggest that the *Historia* was written in two parts – the first in Constantinople prior to 1204 and the second in Nicaea after the fall of the city. He could not provide us with a definitive date for the commencement of the composition, but based on a forward reference to Andronikos I Komnenos’ tyrannical reign that occurs in book IV of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, concluded that the aforementioned book was written after the accession of Isaakios II Angelos to the throne in 1185. Krumbacher further suggested that the entire work was

² Kazhdan, *Concordance*, 2, R108. For example Niketas does date major events such as the siege of Thessaloniki by the Normans in 1185 (302/41) and offers careful and abundant dates for the events of the Fourth Crusade and the capture of Constantinople in 1204 (553/92, 561/38, 568/88, 617/91). His other selections are somewhat puzzling. For example, he dates the insurrection of Maria the *kaissarissa* in 1181 (236/40), but not the battle of Myriokephalon in 1176.

³ Nik. Chon., p. 329/59

⁴ See Kazhdan, *Concordance*, 2, R118.

finished in Nicaea after 1206.⁵ A little while later, in 1912, Ferdinand Chalandon, who like Krumbacher relied on forward references made by Niketas, placed the commencement of the composition a little earlier, concluding that book I of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos was written before the accession of Andronikos I Komnenos in 1183. Book IV of the reign of the same emperor was written after 1185, and book VI could only have been written after the capture of Constantinople in 1204.⁶

In 1924 Henri Grégoire concluded on the basis of an anonymous author who used Niketas as a source that the chapters of the *Historia* dealing with events prior to 1204 had been circulating in Constantinople ‘depuis longtemps’ and that only the final book of the work covering events after 1204 was written in Nicaea.⁷ A later generation of historians followed along the same lines. For example, George Ostrogorsky’s *History of the Byzantine State* states that the *Historia* was begun in Constantinople prior to 1204 and finished in Nicaea after the fall of the city⁸; and Herbert Hunger in his survey of Byzantine Literature expresses the opinion that Niketas began working on the *Historia* not long after the accession of Isaakios II Angelos.⁹ The main challenges to these established views came from Robert Browning, who believed that the entire text was written in the first decades of the thirteenth century¹⁰, and Alexander Kazhdan, who pointed to two passages in the discussion of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, which could not have been written ‘long after 1147’ (i.e. within one generation). Unfortunately, Browning offered no proof to validate his claim and Kazhdan based his opinion on a misunderstanding of Niketas’ use of metaphorical language.¹¹

⁵ K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (537-1453)*, Munich 1897², p. 282.

⁶ F. Chalandon, *Les Comnène, II. Jean II Comnène (1118-1143) et Manuel I Comnène (1143-1180)*, Paris 1912 (repr. 1962), p. XXIV.

⁷ H. Grégoire, ‘Un Continuateur de Constantin Manassès et sa source’, *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger*, I, Paris 1924, p. 280.

⁸ G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, New Brunswick-New Jersey 1969, p. 352.

⁹ Hunger, *Literatur*, I, p. 432.

¹⁰ R. Browning, *The Byzantine Empire*, Washington 1992², p. 205.

¹¹ Kazhdan, Introduction to *Narrazione cronologica*, p. XVI. The first passage (book I, p. 71/64-67) concerns Niketas’ eyewitness testimony regarding the ‘mounds of bones’ that could still be seen laying on the ground from the battle that occurred on the Meander on 1 January 1147 between the French Crusaders and the Turks (καὶ μαρτυροῦσι τὸ τῶν πεσόντων ἐς δεῦρο πολὺποσον οἱ τῶν ὀστέων σωροὶ οὕτω συχνοὶ καὶ μετέωροι ὄντες). However, a similar observation was made by Leo the Deacon after the battle between the Byzantines and the Bulgarians on the plains of Anchialos on 20 August 917 (Leo the Deacon, *Leonis Diaconi Caloensis Historiarum libri X*, ed. C.B. Hase, CSHB, Bonn 1828, p. 124/10 ff: καὶ

The variety of opinions reproduced here can ultimately be traced to aforementioned difficulties in dating the text. Not only have scholars been unable to reach a consensus on the date of composition of the *Historia*, but also virtually no attempt has been made to uncover the circumstances under which it was composed. Yet more than a quarter of a century ago, the erudite philologist, Jan Louis van Dieten published the most significant tool for the study of the *Historia* that has appeared to date – the current and only complete critical edition of the text. While it has been widely accepted that van Dieten's contribution is the 'Höhenpunkt in der Geschichte des *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*', modern scholarship has yet to take advantage of it.¹²

In the first place van Dieten's text has drastically altered our perceptions concerning the dating, circumstances, and textual tradition of the *Historia*. While previous editions were by in large a *laboriosa collatio*, the *editio princeps* of Hieronymos Wolf being based only on three manuscripts, while the rest differed little in substance, van Dieten's text is based on forty three manuscripts and has succeeded in bridging a wide gap previously existing in Byzantine letters.¹³ The editor has subdivided the work into three families of manuscripts and hence three different versions.¹⁴ In addition to these, there are manuscript families, which take an intermediary position, and in a different register of speech, the paraphrase/metaphrase of Niketas' work on a simpler linguistic level. The implications of this are significant: on the one hand in order to arrive at an accurate and precise dating of the entire text, we must first date the different

νῦν ἐστὶν ὁρᾶν εἰσέτι σωρείας ὀστῶν). The second passage (book II, p. 98/8-12) refers to the transfer of weavers from Thebes and Corinth to Sicily in accordance with the agreement reached between Manuel Komnenos and the King of Sicily in 1147. On this occasion Niketas states: καὶ νῦν ἔξεστιν ἰδεῖν τοὺς ἐς Σικελίαν καταίροντας Θηβαίων παῖδας καὶ Κορινθίων ἰσθῶ προσανέχοντας τῶν ἐξαμίτων καὶ χρυσοπάστων στολῶν ὡς Ἐρετριεῖς πάλαι Πέρσαις δουλεύοντος, ὅτι πολέμων ἥρξαν Δαρείῳ στρατείαν καθ' Ἑλλάδος ἐλάσαντι. Niketas' portrait of the Greeks spinning gold-embroidered robes and his comparison of them with the Eretrians forced to serve the Persians raises doubts as to whether this passage has anything to do with actual conditions or for that matter 'present time'.

¹² Scholars have been almost unanimous in their praise of J.-L. van Dieten's edition of the *Historia*: see J. Darrouzès, *REB* 35 (1977), p. 297-98; A. Karpozilos, *Ελληνικά* 31 (1980), pp. 526-28; A. Kazhdan, *BSI* 38 (1977), pp. 54-56; I. Dujčev, *BZ* 72 (1979), pp. 45-53; W. Hörander, *JÖB* 26 (1977), pp. 328-30; J. Irigoin, *REG* 91 (1978), pp. 571-74; O. Kresten, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 85 (1977), pp. 182-85; St. I. Kuruses, *EEBS* 42 (1975/76), p.485-86; M. de Waha, *Byz* 47 (1977), p. 532-33.

¹³ For the previous editions of the text see van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. CVff.

¹⁴ Prior to van Dieten's work, very few scholars attempted to tackle the problems of the origins and transmission of the *Historia*. Hugo Leicht carried out the preliminary work for a critical edition of the text in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: *Studien zur Textgeschichte des Niketas Akominatos*, Munich 1922. The edition never appeared. See discussion in J.-L. van Dieten, 'Noch einmal über Niketas Choniates', *BZ* 57 (1964), pp. 302-28.

versions, and on the other, expose the circumstances of composition in all its distinct phases so as to reveal the purpose of the author and ultimately that of the history.

The first family, referred to by van Dieten as b(revior) has survived in a homogeneous group of codices with many copies R M D F C Σ Φ T Ψ Ω (1-614/7-10) and represents the older and shorter version of the text, which was left unfinished. It commences with the reign of John II Komnenos in 1118 and ends abruptly with the events of February/March 1205 (i.e. the beginnings of the Greek rebellion against the Latins in Thrace). From this family also stems an epitome of the text that has been preserved in three manuscripts K N U. The characteristic features of this group are: 1) The omission and/or abridgment of many passages, which have been passed on in other manuscripts and contain strong criticism of emperors and prominent government officials; 2) The discussion of the reign of Alexios III, which when compared to other manuscripts is significantly shorter and conspicuously uncritical.¹⁵

The second family, a(uctior) V A P-after-revision Γ Δ Θ Λ Ξ M C from 614/7 and sections of W (1-655) commences, like the b-text, with the reign of John II Komnenos, but covers about one and a half years more, that is the events of April 1205-November 1206 (614/7-646), while it too was left incomplete by the author. The only direct witness of this version is represented in V, as A is the result of a contamination among P, V and the lost original draft which van Dieten has designated χ, and P-after-revision presents a series of corrections and additions based on an exemplar of this version. This group of manuscripts contains strong criticism of emperors, government officials, and a longer and more critical discussion of the reign of Alexios III. Additional distinctive features include a harsher criticism of astrology and sorcery, a greater interest in banal anecdotes and cruder expressions,¹⁶ a pervasive tendency to moralise, and an overall atmosphere of unmitigated gloom effected through continuous lamentation and foreboding.

Manuscript P-prior-to-revision and the greater part of W assume an intermediary position between b and a, as they contain some of what a offers on top of b, without having been revised in these passages. Codex P (*Parisinus gr.* 1778, 13th century)

¹⁵ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. LVI. I have modified van Dieten's description of 'less critical' to 'uncritical' for reasons that will become apparent below.

¹⁶ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. LVII.

presents us with a striking revision, where the b-text was clearly replaced with the a-text by the same copyist – as evidenced by the erasure of lines of the older text and their careful replacement by the newer version and a significant enlargement of the text on the margins of the manuscript.¹⁷ The older sections of W (*Vind. hist. gr.* 105, 14th and 15th centuries) offer the b-text, with some deviations, but this codex was fragmentarily added to by two copyists, who inserted large sections of the a-text, and thus in some instances W agrees with b and in others with a.¹⁸ In view of the contamination of these manuscripts, van Dieten speaks of PW as a separate family only with strong reservations.

Finally, there is the LO family, beginning only on 535/3, that is with the arrival of the Fourth crusade in Constantinople in July 1203, but extending beyond the a-text in the length of time it covers, and ending (chronologically) with events that can be dated to the beginning of the second decade of the thirteenth century. This special version of the last part of the *Historia* is characterised by many passages, which are found in the a-text, that are either missing or condensed, and a highly confused chronology concerning the order of events described. LO has many stylistic similarities with the b-text and is closer to it up until 582/46; that is the capture of Constantinople on 13 April 1204 and the end of the reign of Alexios V Doukas in the b-text. However, from that point on (τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν) b has more in common with a (both in style and narration), while some of the things that b shares with a are missing in LO.¹⁹ It is important to note that this version includes what has in the past often been regarded as a separate fragment and conventionally entitled *De Statuis*, the famous description of the antique statues melted down by the crusaders in Constantinople. Below are represented the manuscript families in greater detail.²⁰

Family I: b(revior)

R=*Vaticanus gr.* 169 (13th century)

M=*Marcianus gr.* 403 (14th century)

D=*Vaticanus gr.* 168 (13-14th centuries)

¹⁷ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LVII, LXX-LXXII.

¹⁸ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LXXIX-LXXXI.

¹⁹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. XCV- XCVI.

²⁰ For descriptions of each individual manuscript see: van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, (and bibliography therein), pp. XX-LVI.

F=*Vindobonensis Historicus* gr. 53 (14th century)
 C=*Coislinianus* gr. 137 (1399/1422-1422/50)
 Σ=*Parisinus* gr. 1722 (16th century)
 Φ=*Fuggeranus* V. 159, vol.A (1555)
 T=*Taurinensis* C.III.2 (15th century)
 Ψ=*Atheniensis* 449 (16-17th centuries)
 Ω=*Matritensis* gr. 4621 (15th century)

Epitome

K=*Parisinus* gr. 3041 (14th century)
 N=*Vaticanus* gr. 981 (14th century)
 U=*Urbinus* gr. 95 (15th century)

Family II: a(uctior)

V= *Vaticanus* g. 163 (13th century)
 A=*Vaticanus* gr. 1623 ((13th century)
 P=*Parisinus* gr. 1778-after revision- (13th century)
 Γ= *Marcianus* gr. 403 (14th century)
 Δ=*Berolinensis* gr. 236 (1541)
 Θ=*Philippicus* gr.s 6767 (1541)
 Λ=*Parisinus* gr. 1707 (c.1541)
 Ξ=*Monacensis* gr. 93 (16th century)

Family III: Intermediate version between (b) and (a)

P=*Parisinus* gr.s 1778-before revision- ((13th century)
 W=*Vindobonensis Historicus* gr. 105 (14th –15th century)
 H=*Vindobonensis Historicus* gr. 13 (16th century)

Family IV: LO

L=*Laurentianus* IX. 24 (13th century)
 O=*Oxoniensis Bodleianus* Roe 22 (1286)

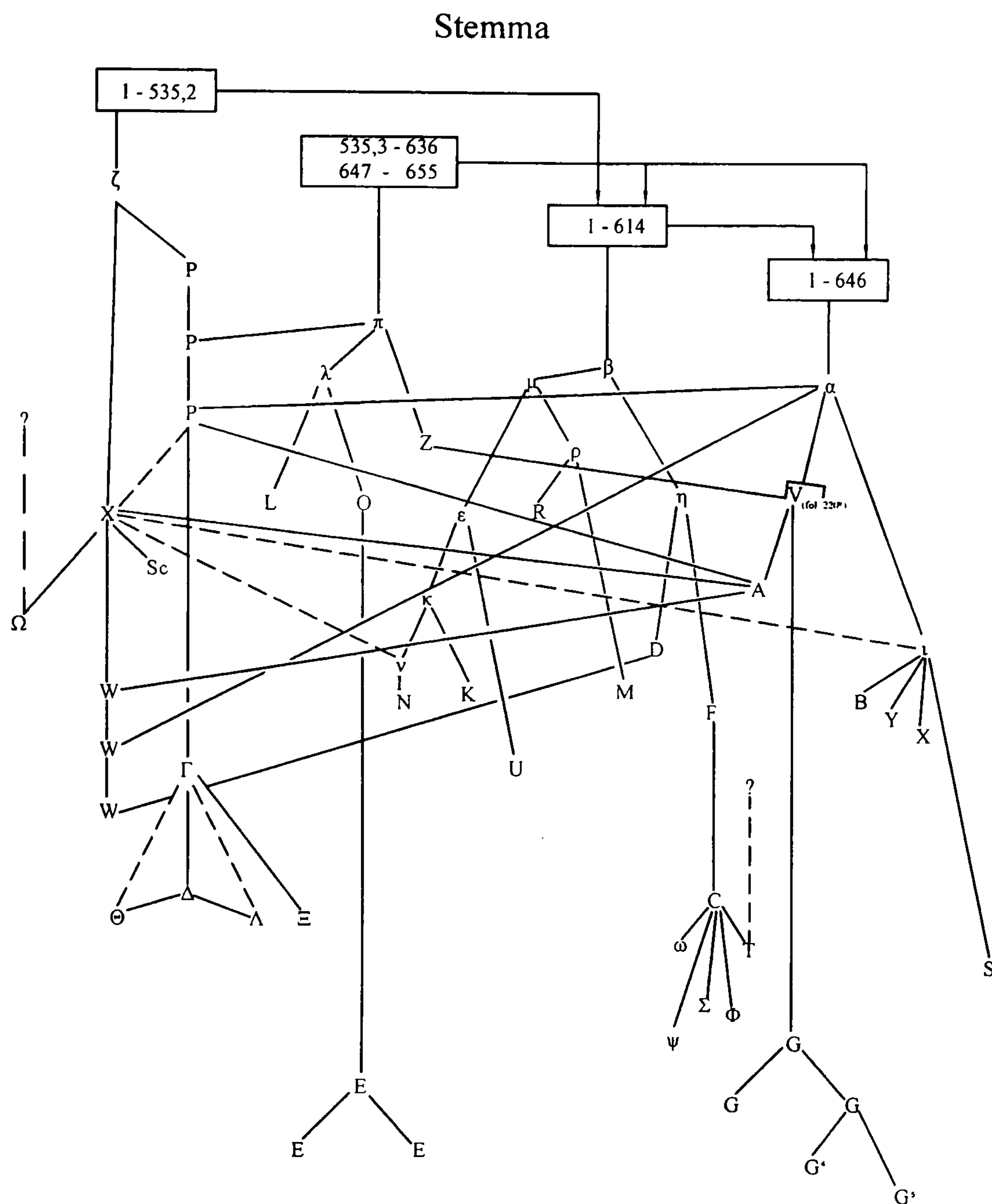
Of course there are manuscripts which resist clear classification, individual contaminated manuscripts such as A and W, the convergence of a and b manuscripts, the coexistence of errors in all manuscripts, all of which prevent us from reaching an unequivocal hypothesis concerning the origins of this highly complex textual tradition, as well as explaining with certainty the interconnections and contradictions among the

manuscripts. Although the editor himself admits that his stemma is in part hypothetical, he nevertheless attempts to reconstruct the history of the composition of the text and presents us with the following theory of origins and tradition.

According to van Dieten, the original 'Niketastext' (1-535/2, designated ζ by the editor), which has not survived to our days, was written down in Constantinople prior to 1204. It was copied at that time, perhaps by an intimate friend of the author's, and in all likelihood forms the basis of the original P and W texts (i.e. those which contain version b). In Selymbria (April 1204 - June 1206), Constantinople (July 1206 - December 1206) and Nicaea (1207/8), Niketas wrote a continuation of the work (535/3-636, 647-655), which he 'published' together with his theological work, *Panoplia Dogmatike*, i.e. he sent a copy to an anonymous friend. This version has been preserved in LO (van Dieten designates the archetype π). In Nicaea, the author soon became aware of the inadequacies of his work and revised the whole text, paying particular attention to the final sections (583 onwards). When unexpectedly, a new opportunity opened up in the political field for him, he abandoned his work and gave permission for it to be copied. This is how version b (archetype β) came about. However, because his hopes for the future were not realised and because he was increasingly coming to the realisation that his historical work had presented a palliative portrait of the period, he revised the whole once again. 'Perhaps he was already ill and could foresee his imminent death', says van Dieten. This work has survived in version a (archetype α) and was unfinished at the author's death.²¹

Thus the original Niketastext has five distinct phases of composition: 1) 1-535/2 original version of b; 2) 1-535/2 b + 535/3-582/46 LO; 3) 1-535/2 b + 535/3-583/36 + 585/58-636/65 + 647, 1-655/65 LO from 535/3-655/65 provisionally revised; 4) 1-535/2 b + 535/3-614/7-10 b revised; 5) 1-646 version a. Below is a reproduction of van Dieten's schematic representation of the textual tradition of the *Historia* (CI of his introduction).

²¹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. C.



The main text of van Dieten's edition offers version a, although it should be noted that in reconstructing this version the editor has given preference to agreements verified between V and P-after-revision and V and b. The critical apparatus deals with the following three areas: the different readings of individual manuscripts; the variant readings of version b; and those of version LO. This in itself is very significant, for it allows the reader to follow the different versions of the text virtually side by side. Yet as important and innovative as van Dieten's contribution is, there still exist unsolved problems having to do with his theory of origins and tradition and especially the chronology of the different versions.²² Moreover, although the editor briefly mentions the

²² Some of these issues were raised in the review articles of van Dieten's edition. For example, Alexander Kazhdan pointed out that van Dieten's theory is in the first place too complex. Second, the position and role of the intermediate manuscripts (PW) is unclear. Third, the question of whether all the versions were penned by Niketas himself is left open by the editor: *BSI* 38 (1977), pp. 54-56; J. Irigoin further questioned

circumstances of composition of the text in Nicaea, these have to be looked into in detail and compared with the circumstances of composition of the original text. Only then can we hope to gain greater insight into the composition of the text in all its distinct phases and uncover the purposes of the successive revisions conducted by of our author. We would like to begin with the dating and circumstances of composition of the original Niketastext as it has been preserved in b(revior).

b(revior) prior to 1204

In his introduction to the *Historia* van Dieten cites a series of passages that clearly indicate a date of composition prior to 1204²³: 55/18-21: pirates ‘rule’ the seas and harass the Roman maritime provinces in present times as a result of the ill-conceived naval policies of John II Komnenos²⁴; 114/17-20: a porphyry bowl which once stood outside the palace of Nikephoros Phokas now stands in a hall built by Manuel I Komnenos²⁵; 117/85-87: the looting of Asia Minor by the Turks, who have subjugated the ‘holy’ nation and the Roman citizens.²⁶; 124/13-14: Laodikeia had not at that time (ca. 1173) been as well fortified as it was now²⁷; 150/53-56: the fortresses of Neokastra in Asia Minor have a governor from Constantinople and contribute annual revenues to

van Dieten’s theory of origins, and especially the role of manuscript P: *REG* 91 (1978), pp. 571-74. It is only fair to point out that van Dieten has responded to some of these objections in more recent years. See especially his article ‘Niketas Choniates und codex Parisinus Graecus 1778’, *JÖB* 44 (1994), pp. 49-58. In the first place, van Dieten vigorously defends the authorship of Niketas of all the versions of the text (49, n. 2) and argues convincingly against Irigoin’s theory that ms. P is either the autograph copy of the author or an exemplar of the work of Niketas’ secretary, who was ordered to carry out the alterations of version a (esp. pp. 52-53).

²³ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCII.

²⁴ Nik. Chon: καὶ νῦν ἐκ τῆς κακοβουλίας ταύτης εἴτ’ οὖν μικροπρεπείας θαλασσοκρατοῦσιν οἱ πειραταὶ καὶ κακῶς πεπράγασι ταῖς ληστρίσιν αἱ παραθαλαττίδιοι Ῥωμαίων χῶραι καὶ ὡς ἂν κατεύξαιτο οἱ διάφοροι.

²⁵ Nik.Chon: συνέθετό ποτε τῷ βασιλεῖ Μανουῆλ ὕδατος πλησθεῖσαν διεκροφῆσαι τὴν πορφύρεον λεκανίδα, ἣν εἶχε μὲν πρότερον ἡ αἰθριώδης τοῦ κοιτῶνος αὐλῆος τοῦ βασιλέως Νικηφόρου τοῦ Φωκᾶ, ἡ καὶ ἄνωθεν τοῦ Βουκολέοντος ὑπτιάζουσα, νυνὶ δὲ ὁ παρὰ τοῦ εἰς ἱστορίαν προκειμένου βασιλέως οἰκοδομηθεῖς.

²⁶ Nik.Chon: ἕως πότε παραλλάξ ἔρποντα ἐσεῖται τὰ ἄτοπα καὶ οἱ μὲν τῆς δουλίδος Ἄγαρ ἀπόγονοι κατακυριεύσουσι τῶν ἐλευθέρων ἡμῶν ἀπολοῦσί τε καὶ ἀποτεκνοῦσι τὸ σὸν ἅγιον ἔθνος.

²⁷ Nik.Chon: στείλας δὲ καὶ φάλλαγκας ἐπιλέκτους τὴν κατὰ Φρυγίαν ἐκπορθεῖ Λαοδικεῖαν, οὐκέτι οὔσαν συνοικουμένην ὡς νῦν ἑώρατε.

the treasury²⁸; 206/52-54: the emperors spent the summer in the palaces by the Propontis²⁹; 329/55-59: certain parts of Constantinople are now supplied by a water pipe built by Andronikos I Komnenos, which was not, however, completed by his successors up to that time³⁰; 352/1-2: the remains of the not yet decomposed corpse of Andronikos I (died 1185) could still be seen in a pit near the Ephoros cloister.³¹

All these passages are indeed significant, for if Niketas was writing after 1204, he would certainly not complain about the subjugation of Byzantine cities to the Turks in Asia Minor, nor about the rampant piracy, which plagued the waters of the Aegean. The corpse of Andronikos I Komnenos would have been fully decomposed, and his successors would no longer be reigning in Constantinople. It is, however, Niketas' own testimony that confirms the pre-1204 date. In the preface to the *Historia*, he tells us that because he was not an eyewitness to the events he recorded for the reign of John II Komnenos, he set down what he heard from those contemporaries who knew the emperor personally, and who escorted him on military campaigns.³² These contemporaries could hardly have been alive after 1204, and even if they were, we cannot infer that they were readily available to provide Niketas with information either in Selymbria or Nicaea. But it is perfectly reasonable to assume that the historian acquired information from the veterans of John II Komnenos' last military campaign in Syria (early 1140s) in say, the late 1180s or even the early 1190s.

Finally, Niketas himself reveals that he was still young when he began working on the history. In the elaborately-worked preface to the *Historia*, the author feels compelled to justify his ambitious endeavour at such a young age: 'For those things which old men, much older than Tithonos and three times the age of a crow, if they were still among the living, would have taken pleasure in relating to willing listeners, kindling the fires of memory and restoring to life past actions, the lover of learning proposes to

²⁸ Nik.Chon: οὐκοῦν καὶ ἴδιον ἐπώνυμον ταυτὶ τὰ φρούρια κληρωσάμενα (Νεόκαστρα γὰρ ὀνομάζονται) οἰκεῖόν τε ἀρμοστήν ἐκ Βυζαντίου στελλόμενον ἔχουσι καὶ εἰς τὸ βασίλειον ταμιεῖον ἐτήσια ξυμφέρουσι κέρματα.

²⁹ Nik.Chon: ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς πλείους τῶν κατὰ τὸν πορθμὸν τῆς Προποντίδος λαμπρῶν οἰκοδομιῶν, ἐν αἷς οἱ βασιλεῖς Ῥωμαίων θερίζουσι.

³⁰ Nik.Chon: καὶ νῦν ἐκ τούτου ὑδρεύονται ὅποσοι περὶ τὰς Βλαχέρνας καὶ ἔτι ἐνδοτέρω τὴν οἴκησιν ἔλαχον. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἅπαν τὸ ὑδροδοχεῖον ἐπεσκεύαστο, ἵνα καὶ κατὰ μέσσην τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐκδίδωσι τὸ ὕδωρ διαυλωνιζόμενον· ὁ γὰρ μίτος ἐκεῖνον ἐπιλέλοιπε τῆς ζωῆς. τοσοῦτον δ' ἐμέλησε τοῖς μετ' ἐκεῖνον ἄρξασιν, ὅσοι τέως ἐς δεῦρο ἀνάσσουσι.

³¹ Nik.Chon: ὃ καὶ εἰσέτι μὴ πάντῃ διαλυθὲν τῆς ἀρμονίας τοῖς βουλομένοις ὁπτάνεται.

³² Nik.Chon, p. 4/73-81.

relate, even though he has not yet passed adolescence.’³³ Niketas is, of course, speaking metaphorically as far as his actual age is concerned, but there is no doubt that the historian is indeed referring to himself. This can be corroborated by a hitherto neglected remark made by Niketas’ elder contemporary and family friend, Eustathios of Thessaloniki.³⁴ This author refused to narrate the deeds of Andronikos I Komnenos in his own history of the capture of Thessaloniki in 1185 because: ‘Hotter spirits would then find other words for them, for it needs a young man’s voice to tell them, and even more than that, a well developed ability to use language in a calculated way, so as to hit the target at which it is aimed.’³⁵ Taken together, these two references seem to point to none other than Niketas himself.

A more precise pre-1204 date of composition was suggested by van Dieten himself, who concluded that Niketas began his historiographical work just before Andronikos I was overthrown (12/9/1185), whose reign is referred to as tyranny as early as 50/57-8, (book I of Manuel I Komnenos). The bulk of the *Historia* was not, however, written before the accession of Alexios III (8/4/1195), who is mentioned as future emperor as early as 245/82-83, (book I of Alexios II Komnenos).³⁶ We cannot possibly dispute the reference belonging to Alexios III, which indicates that at least from the reign of Alexios II (1180-2) Niketas was writing after 1195. However, the fact that Andronikos is mentioned as tyrant earlier does not constitute substantial proof that Niketas was writing as early as 1185, as a later date could easily be presupposed.

³³ Nik.Chon, p. 2/25-29: ἄ γὰρ οἱ πολυτεῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ Τιθωνοῦ παλαῖτεροι καὶ τρικόρωνοι, εἰ τῷ βίῳ ἔτι περιῆσαν, ἥδεσαν ἄν καὶ ἐξηγοῦντο τοῖς φιλακροάμοσι, τὰ τῆς μνήμης ἐμπυρεύοντες καὶ τὰς τῶν πράξεων ῥυσσὰς ἀνασκάλλοντες, ταῦτα δήπου προθείη καὶ ὁ φιλόστωρ, κἂν οὐδέπω παρηλλάχει τὸν μείρακα.

³⁴ See the *Monodia* written on the occasion of Eustathios’ death by his pupil Michael Choniates, I, pp. 283-306, and II, letters: 1, 4, 6, 7, 16, 36; G. Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates. Metropolit von Athen (ca. 1138-ca. 1222)*, Rome 1934, p. 140ff. For Eustathios see A. P. Kazhdan & S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the eleventh and twelfth Centuries*, Cambridge 1984, pp. 115-95 (more bibliography in *ODB* 1, p. 754).

³⁵ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 53: Eustathios’ account was delivered in the form of a Lenten sermon to the people of Thessaloniki in February 1186, less than six months after the Normans had evacuated the city. However, this does not necessarily mean that the account, in the form that it has reached us was completed at such an early date. E. Leone, ‘Conjectures sur la composition de “La Prise de Thessalonique” d’Eustathe,’ *Byz* 34 (1964), pp. 267-69, proposes a more complex form of composition: a much briefer version was indeed read before the beginning of Lent in 1186, but this was expanded at a later date and ornamented with rhetorical enrichments. He further argues that Eustathios could not have delivered such an address to his flock which would have taken as much as four hours to read, and in such a ‘high-style’ language.

³⁶ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCII.

Two references occurring in books IV and V of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos strongly suggest that Niketas was engaged in writing the history of this emperor at the very least after 1197.³⁷ The first concerns Manuel's war against the Serbian ruler Stefan Nemanja (1168). In relating this episode Niketas seems to presuppose the resignation of Nemanja, which occurred on 25/3/1196: '[Manuel] had heard that the satrap of Serbia (at that time it was Stefan Nemanja) had become over-bold.'³⁸ Had Nemanja still been in power, there would have been no need for Niketas to make such a clarification.³⁹ The second passage concerns the blinding of Michael Sikidites, astrologer and sorcerer, at the command of Manuel I Komnenos. At this stage of the narrative Niketas tells us that Sikidites not only survived the punishment, but *after some time* went on compose heretical treatises on the Divine Sacraments.⁴⁰ This *after some time* refers to the period 1197-1200, when Sikidites' doctrine gave rise to the theological disputes related in detail by Niketas in book II of the reign of Alexios III.⁴¹ Therefore, if Niketas was writing book IV of the reign of Manuel I, by the most conservative estimate after 1197, when exactly did he begin the composition?

We believe the answer is to be found in the title of the b-text, which deserves to be quoted *in extenso*: τοῦ λογοθέτου τῶν σεκρέτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κρίσεων, γεγονότος δὲ καὶ ἐφόρου καὶ κριτοῦ τοῦ βήλου, γενικοῦ καὶ προκαθημένου τοῦ κοιτῶνος Νικήτα τοῦ Χωνιάτου ἱστορία ἀρχομένη ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ βασιλέως κῦρ Ἰωάννου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ, τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ βασιλέως κῦρ Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ. If we compare this version to the one found in the a-text, we immediately notice some important differences: χρονική διήγησις τοῦ Χωνιάτου κῦρ Νικήτα ἀρχομένη

³⁷ It should be here noted that van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCII has suggested that book I dealing with the reign of John II Komnenos was written at a later date. This is indicated, for example, by the detailed introduction of John Axouch in book I of Manuel I (48/5-6), who had already been introduced in similar terms in book I of John II (9/23 ff). See also Maisano, Notes to *Narrazione cronologica*, I, p. LXXX, who strengthens van Dieten's hypothesis with similar references.

³⁸ Nik. Chon., p. 158/85-87.

³⁹ As already pointed out by van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. CIX.

⁴⁰ Nik. Chon., pp. 149/32-150/34: ἄτερος δὲ εἰς μοναχὸν ἀποθριξάμενος χρόνῳ ὕστερον σύγγραμμά τι περὶ τῶν θείων μυστηρίων ξυνθέμενος ἀφῆκε δι' αὐτοῦ κυνῶν ὠρυγὰς, ὃ τῶν θείων δωρεῶν ἀνάξιος. The identification of Sikidites with Michael Glykas was made long ago by K. Krumbacher, 'Michael Glykas, eine Skizze seiner Biographie und seiner litterarischen Thätigkeit nebst einem unedierten Gedichte und Briefe desselben', *Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, philosophisch-philologisch und historische Klasse, Munich 1894, III, pp. 391-460. See also H. G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, Munich 1959, p. 343.

⁴¹ Nik. Chon., pp. 514/38-517/4. The most detailed account of the controversy is in book 27 of Niketas' *Panoplia Dogmatike* (ed. Eustratiades), pp. κ'-μ'.

ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας Ἰωάννου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ καὶ λήγουσα μέχρι τῆς ἀλώσεως τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. First, while the title of b has only a beginning – ἀρχομένη – the title of a has both a beginning and an end – ἀρχομένη καὶ λήγουσα. Second, the ἱστορία of version b becomes χρονική διήγησις in version a. Finally, while in the b-text Niketas provides us with a full array of his illustrious offices in government; in the a-text this is no longer the case.⁴²

We should not attach much significance to the change of title, for in the mind of contemporaries, the terms ἱστορία and χρονική διήγησις were essentially identical.⁴³ However, the fact that version b does not mention an end point could perhaps be attributed to the circumstances at the time of composition, i.e. Niketas was in the midst of an imperial reign that he planned to narrate. The most important of the changes made to the title concern the offices held by Niketas. We are, of course, interested in the highest and thus latest in date, the *logothetes ton sekreton*, for since it appears in version b, Niketas was in all likelihood writing after his promotion to this post. As we have seen in the introduction, Niketas replaced his brother-in-law John Belissariotes as *logothetes ton sekreton* at around 1196/97. The commencement of the composition of the *Historia* should also be dated to around that time. This is indicated by Michael Choniates' single surviving letter to his brother, dated to ca. 1194/95.⁴⁴ On this occasion, the metropolitan addresses Niketas as *epi ton kriseon*, and replies to his brother's many requests to send him all his written works in one volume.⁴⁵ Since Niketas utilised Michael's works to a great extent in the composition of the *Historia*, we can assume that at this stage he was still collecting material for the text. We can thus conclude that Niketas began working on

⁴² van Dieten does not address the issue of the authenticity of the titles of the *Historia* in his introduction. However, there is no reason to assume that they are not original and I will be working from the supposition that they are. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Ewald Kislinger for our conversation and his advice on this issue.

⁴³ Maisano, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, I, p. 509, n. 1.

⁴⁴ Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates*, p. 232; van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 34.

⁴⁵ Michael Choniates, II, p. 1: That Michael identifies Niketas as *epi ton kriseon* and not *logothetes ton sekreton* is not problematic, for even in the *Monodia* written on the occasion of Niketas' death, Michael still calls him *epi ton kriseon*, I, p. 345/V. M. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea (1204-1261)*, Oxford 1975, p. 149, claims on the basis of the titles that appear in Michael's letters that Niketas was raised to high judicial office and made head of the emperor's chamber whilst at Nikaia. These titles, however, refer to Niketas' career under Isaakios II, not Theodore I Laskaris. See van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 22-51.

the *Historia* only during the reign of Alexios III Angelos and probably shortly after his promotion to the post of *logothetes ton sekreton*.⁴⁶

This is in turn closely connected to the circumstances of the original composition. In his introduction van Dieten notes the remarkable difference between versions b and a specifically in the discussion of the reign of Alexios III. Version a is significantly longer, more comprehensive, more critical and more detailed. Many episodes are completely missing in the b-text, while for those that appear in both versions, more information is provided in a. These cannot be analysed at this stage, but it is instrumental to list the most important passages altered in the a-text: 453/3-461/13, 465/32-467/86, 471/90-3, 477/68-478/1, 478/14-479/43, 483/35-493/66, 502/10-507/60, 513/31-514/36, 519/44-520/66.⁴⁷ According to van Dieten, these differences become understandable only if one assumes that b notes the events almost simultaneously as they occur, while a was written later and influenced by changes in judgment and living circumstances.⁴⁸

We would like to take this hypothesis one step further. The reign of Alexios III in version b is, in fact, almost completely uncritical and indeed in most cases can be viewed as favourable to this emperor. The best examples are the episodes of Alexios' usurpation of the throne in 1195 (450/58-453/3), the expedition against the rebel Chrysos in 1196/97 (502/10 ff.), and the diplomatic exchanges with the German emperor Henry VI (477/66-479/46).⁴⁹ In these episodes events are not merely interpreted differently, but for the most

⁴⁶ An adscript found in manuscript V fol.103^v (Nik.Chon., p. 1/1-3) could further strengthen our case. *Vaticanus graecus* 163 was in Constantinople from at least 1391, when it was purchased by the scholar and renowned collector of manuscripts, John Chortasmenos (for this individual see H. Hunger, 'Joannes Chortasmenos, ein byzantinischer Intellektueller der späten Palaiologenzeit', *WSI* 70 (1957), pp. 153-63). In addition to the *Historia*, it contains the *Epitome* of John Kinnamos in its single surviving manuscript, the verse chronicle of Constantine Manasses, an anonymous chronicle from the Creation to Romanos, son of Constantine VII, and the history of George Akropolites in its most important codex (See Io. Mercati-Franchi de Cavalieri, *Codices Vaticani Graeci*, Rome 1923, pp. 185-87; van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. XXIII-XXV). It was Chortasmenos who inserted the following lines in fol. 103^v: εὖρον ἐν ἑτέρῳ παλαιῷ βιβλίῳ οὕτως κείμενον· τοῦ λογοθέτου τῶν σεκρέτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κρίσεων, γεγονότος δὲ καὶ ἐφόρου καὶ κριτοῦ τοῦ βήλου καὶ προκαθημένου τοῦ βασιλικοῦ κοιτῶνος (in marg.'Ισαακίου βασιλέως τοῦ Ἀγγέλου) Νικήτα τοῦ ἀπὸ Χωνῶν, πόλεως τῆς Φρυγίας). This commentary closely resembles the title of the b-text, and it is obvious that Chortasmenos wished to emphasize that Niketas held these positions under Isaakios II Angelos. This is significant for it associates Niketas, as he identifies himself in the b-text, with Isaakios II. However, Isaakios' name was added (in the same handwriting), replacing what had been erased in the original line. I do not wish to speculate about who may have originally been named as Niketas' employer, but given the fact that Niketas did not hold any official posts under Theodore I Laskaris, the most likely candidate is Alexios III.

⁴⁷ As noted by van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. XCIV-XCV.

⁴⁸ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. XCIV-XCV.

⁴⁹ These will be analyzed in the following chapter.

part are narrated differently. This cannot be explained by changes in judgement, or even newly discovered information long after the event, as it is blatantly obvious that Niketas often concealed information potentially damaging for the emperor in version b. But it can be explained if we assume that at the time Niketas was writing the original version, he either did not deem it expedient to criticise the reigning emperor, or had, in fact, undertaken the task with the auspices of the regime or a patron closely connected to the imperial family and/or court.

That Alexios III was, in fact, the reigning emperor at the time of the original composition can be confirmed by the following observation: the only time Niketas refers to the ‘present emperor’ in the entire text, he refers to Alexios III. When the historian relates the rebuilding of the ancient underground aqueduct in Constantinople by Andronikos I, he tells us that this project had not been completed due to Andronikos’ removal: ‘so much were those who ruled after him – those at least who rule until now – concerned to bring this work of communal benefit to completion, that Isaakios, who removed him from power as well as from life, destroyed the tower along with the most delightful dwellings, as if in envy towards Andronikos for this most noble deed’.⁵⁰ Although Niketas only criticises Isaakios explicitly for his neglect, it is clear that the passage refers to both of Andronikos’ successors.

Niketas’ history was originally a history of imperial reigns, clearly continuing where previous historians had ended,⁵¹ and designed at its inception to narrate the reigns of the Komnenian emperors. When Alexios III assumed the throne he changed his name from Angelos to Komnenos, although this information is not offered in the b-text.⁵² Instead, the title of book I of Alexios’ reign in this version reads: βασιλεία τοῦ βασιλέως κῦρ Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ.⁵³ Although criticism of the previous Komnenian rulers is not missing in the b-text, as we shall see clearly later on, this

⁵⁰ Nik.Chon., pp. 329/58-330/63: τοσοῦτον δ’ ἐμέλησε τοῖς μετ’ ἐκεῖνον ἄρξασιν, ὅσοι τέως ἐς δεῦρο ἀνάσσουσι, πέρας ἐπιθεῖναι τῷ κοινωφελεῖ τούτῳ ἔργῳ, ὥστε καὶ ὁ τοῦτον μεταστήσας τῆς ἀρχῆς ἅμα καὶ τῆς ζωῆς Ἰσαάκιος τὸν τε πύργον κατήρειψε καὶ τὰς χαριεστάτας οἰκήσεις κατέβαλε, φθόνων ὥσπερ Ἀνδρονίκῳ τῆς καλλίστης ταυτησὶ πράξεως.

⁵¹ As Niketas himself declares in the preface (p. 4/66-69): ἀρχὴ δὲ μοι τῆς ἱστορίας ὅσα μετὰ τὸ πέρας εὐθύς τῆς ζωῆς ἅμα καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ ἐκ Κομνηνῶν ἄρξαντος πρώτως Ἀλεξίου συμβέβηκεν, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐς τόνδε τὸν ἄνακτα τὸ λέγειν συνεπεράναντο ὅποσοι τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν τῇ συγγραφῇ προδήλως ἐπέβαλον.

⁵² Nik.Chon., p. 459/53-64 VAP.

⁵³ Nik.Chon., p. 453/1-2 b.

criticism is only latent, if at all present, in the original version of the *Historia*. But, of course, the tendency to eulogise the reigning emperor is common enough in Byzantium and especially so at times when the majority of the writers belonged to the imperial court circle. Especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries historical writing centred at the imperial court in Constantinople. The *caesar* Nikephoros Bryennios undertook his history at the behest of Eirene Doukaina, wife of Alexios I.⁵⁴ Michael Attaleiates, a high legal official, dedicated his history to Nikephoros III Botaneiates.⁵⁵ Constantine Manasses wrote his popular verse chronicle at the request of Eirene, wife of the *sebastokrator* Andronikos Komnenos,⁵⁶ and Michael Psellos ended his *Chronographia* with a eulogy of Michael VII Doukas.⁵⁷ Perhaps most telling of all is Psellos' own declaration that it was in fact Michael VII himself who provided the material for his own reign. Addressing, the son of the emperor, Constantine, Psellos declares: 'If I leave beyond the normal span, I will compose another history for you, when you have given me deeds to write of.'⁵⁸

Niketas was one of the highest officials serving in the administration of Alexios III. He remained *logothetes ton sekreton* and head of the senate until dismissed by the new emperor, Alexios V Doukas in 1204.⁵⁹ On a more personal level, he was related to the

⁵⁴ For the text see *Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum libri quattuor*, ed. P. Gautier, CFHB, Brussels 1975. For bibliography: Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, pp. 271-74; G. Moravcsik, *Byzantino-Turcica*, I, *Die byzantinischen Quellen der Geschichte der Türkvölker*, Berlin 1958² (repr. 1983) pp. 443-44; Hunger, *Literatur*, I, pp. 394-400; *ODB* 1, p. 331; A. Carile, 'La "Ἰστορία" del Cesare Niceforo Briennio', *Aevum* 43 (1969), pp. 235-82.

⁵⁵ For the text see Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, eds. W. Brunet de Presle & I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonn 1853. For bibliography: Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, pp. 269-71; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, pp. 427-29; Hunger, *Literatur*, I, pp. 382-89; *ODB* 1, p. 229; Kazhdan-Franklin, *Studies*, pp. 23-86; E. Tsolakis, 'Aus dem Leben des Michael Attaleiates (seine Heimatstadt, sein Geburts- und sein Todesjahr)', *BZ* 58 (1965), pp. 3-10; Idem, 'Das Geschichtswerk des Michael Attaleiates und die Zeit seiner Abfassung', *Bvζ* 2 (1970), pp. 251-68.

⁵⁶ For the text see Constantine Manasses, *Breviarium historiae metricum*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonn 1837. For bibliography see Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, pp. 376-80; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, pp. 353-54; Hunger, *Literatur*, I, pp. 419-22; O. Lampsides, *Δημοσιεύματα περί την Χρονικήν Σύνοψιν Κωνσταντίνου του Μανάσση*, Athens 1980.

⁵⁷ K. Snipes, 'The Chronographia of Michael Psellos and the Textual Tradition and Transmission of the Byzantine Historians of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *ZRVI* 27-28 (1989), p. 60. For the text see *Michel Psellos chronographie*, ed. E. Renauld, I-II, Paris 1928 (rep. 1967). For the abundant bibliography on Psellos see Hunger, *Literatur*, pp. 372-82; *ODB* 3, 1754-55.

⁵⁸ Michael Psellos, II, pp. 179 (Eng. trans. E. R. Sewter, *The Chronographia of Michael Psellus*, London 1953, p. 286).

⁵⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 565/11-15: εἶχε δὲ καὶ συνερίθου σκίασμα ἰσχνόν παρεπόμενον τὸν κηδεστὴν φιλοκάλην, ὃν οὐχ ἑτέρως ἔχων ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀκροῦ στῆσαι τῆς συγκλήτου βατῆρος ἡμᾶς μὲν ἀπ'

established bureaucratic family of the Belissariotes, having married the sister of the *megas logothetes*, John Belissariotes.⁶⁰ As is evident from his correspondence, Niketas was also intimately connected to one of the most powerful families of the age, the Kamateroi. Especially significant is the author's relationship to Basil Kamateros, brother of empress Euphrosyne Kamatere and uncle to Theodore I Laskaris of Nicaea. This highly influential figure is a recipient of a number of Niketas' letters, which strongly indicate that a patron-client relationship was in existence.⁶¹ One of those letters (no. 11 in Niketas' collection) served as a cover letter of a revision of book 17 of the author's other major work, the *Panoplia Dogmatike*, dealing with the heresy of the Armenians.⁶² It is equally significant that Constantine Mesopotamites, a major political figure in the decades of the 1180s and 1190s and later metropolitan of Thessaloniki (1196/97-1227), as well as a recipient of Niketas' letters,⁶³ was also the owner of manuscript L (*Laurentianus* IX 24, 13th century) of the LO version of the *Historia*.⁶⁴

Virtually next to nothing is known of Niketas' relationship with Alexios III, as the author totally excludes himself as a participant of the events of Alexios' reign, while he conspicuously appears with an active role during the reign of Isaakios II, when in his capacity of governor of Philipopolis, he received a set of contradictory orders from the emperor,⁶⁵ and when he personally came at odds with him over the mishandling of the passage of the Third Crusade.⁶⁶ Yet it would be preposterous to assume that the *logothetes ton sekreton* and head of the senate was not closely involved in the affairs of the state during the reign of Alexios III, or that he was not acquainted with the emperor personally. Could it be that Niketas portrayed himself in opposition to Isaakios II for the benefit of Alexios III and his intimate circle? Whatever the case, the most likely scenario unfolding in our eyes is that the *Historia*, in its original form was not a personal

οὐδεμίας εὐσχήμονος προφάσεως τοῦ τοῖς σεκρέτοις λογοθετεῖν παραλέλκεν, ἐκεῖνον δ' ἀντιπροβέβληκεν.

⁶⁰ van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 25.

⁶¹ *Orationes et epistulae*, no. 2, 7, 11, pp. 202-03, 209-11, 216-17.

⁶² F. Cavallera, 'Le Trésor de la Foi Orthodoxe de Nicétas Acominatos', *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique publié par l'Institut de Toulouse* 5 (1913), pp. 124-37; van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 181 ff.

⁶³ *Orationes et epistulae*, no. 4, 9, pp. 204-06, 214.

⁶⁴ The identification was made by R. Walter, *Gnomon* 50 (1978), p. 539 (review of van Dieten's edition).

⁶⁵ Nik.Chon., p.402/49-55.

⁶⁶ Nik.Chon, p. 410/55 ff.

endeavour of the author, but largely the product of the court circle of Alexios III, penned by perhaps the most talented rhetorician present, Niketas Choniates.

It cannot be overstressed that in a despotic society such as Byzantium, a writer's work and indeed his personality came under the dual pressure of secular and clerical authorities.⁶⁷ Freedom of expression was veiled under puzzling rhetorical constructions, ancient and biblical allusions and fictitious speeches. These were not merely rhetorical devices blindly copied from the great masters of antiquity, as has so often been mistakenly assumed, but served as tools of expression and criticism.⁶⁸ In the case of Niketas, we are confronted with a writer, who was at the same time a prominent government official, and not a secluded monk retired from active political life and writing in the safe haven provided by the walls of a monastery.⁶⁹ Our historian was undoubtedly heavily dependent on imperial favour for his own livelihood. Thus freedom of expression was not an option – it would be a political death sentence, if not worse.

Cases similar to that of Niketas can be found throughout the course of Byzantine history. The most obvious example is that of the sixth-century writer, Procopius who wrote a 'corrective' to his epic work, the *Wars* (covering the period 527-553/54) in the form of an angry pamphlet against the emperor Justinian I (527-65).⁷⁰ According to

⁶⁷ J.N. Ljubarkij, 'Writer's Intrusion in early Byzantine Literature', *XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Major Papers*, Moscow 1991, p. 433; Alexander Kazhdan had also touched upon this problem in *People and Power in Byzantium*, Washington 1982, pp. 96-116.

⁶⁸ On veiled criticism under rhetorical expressions see now A. Kaldelis, *The Argument of Michael Psellos' Chronographia*, Leiden 1999; Idem, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*, Philadelphia 2004.

⁶⁹ As was, for example, John Zonaras (see remarks of P. Magdalino, 'Aspects of twelfth-century Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*', *Speculum* 58 (1983), p. 333).

⁷⁰ For the text see: Procopius, *The Anecdota or Secret History*, trans. H. B. Dewing, Loeb Classical Library, London 1935. The mere existence of the *Anecdota* has puzzled modern scholars, who have argued about a variety of issues ranging from its authorship and genre to its veracity and seriousness, while attempting to reconstruct a developmental view of Procopius' writing so as to accommodate the work in his entire oeuvre. See J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire (395 A.D. to 800)* I, London 1889, pp. 355, 359 ff; Idem, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius to the death of Justinian*, II, London 1923, p. 417 (first argued that Procopius could not have been the author of the *Anecdota*, but changed his mind in the later work, supposing that the author had suffered a 'brainstorm'); J. A. S. Evans, 'Procopius of Caesarea and the Emperor Justinian', *Papers of the Canadian Historical Association* (1968), p. 136 (actually suggested that Procopius was schizophrenic!); A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Survey*, I, Oxford 1964, p. 266 (simply dismissed the *Anecdota*). Later scholarship has taken a more pragmatic view; B. Rubin, *Procopius von Kaisareia*, Stuttgart 1954; A. Cameron, *Procopius and the sixth century*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1985, pp. 49-83; G. Fatouros, 'Zur Prokop-Biographie', *Klio* 62 (1980), pp. 517-23; K. Adshead, 'The Secret History of Procopius and its genesis', *Byz* 63 (1993), pp. 5-28; G. Greatrex, 'The dates of Procopius' works', *BMGS* 18 (1994), pp. 101-14.

Procopius himself, the *Anecdota* or *Secret History* was written with the explicit purpose of providing the ‘real’ explanations for events and revealing that which could not be said in the *Wars*.⁷¹ The author further claims that it was not possible for him to publish the work ‘as long as the actors were still alive [...] for neither was it possible to elude the vigilance of multitudes of spies, nor if detected, to escape a most cruel death.’⁷² The eleventh century court rhetorician, teacher and later metropolitan of Euchaita, John Mauropous has left us a poem, which strongly insinuates that he was forced to abandon his own historical work because he refused to lie: ‘The author has never yet told a lie, but even if he were to lie in the rest of the work in the manner that those who commissioned it would like, with whose praises the book revels, this is still insufficient, for the desire of the powerful for eulogy is insatiable. Therefore he leaves the praises for encomia and does not allow the writing to proceed any further, for it lacks the natural ability to lie.’⁷³ Such a historical work has not come down to us, but some scholars have argued that it was destroyed because the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos was not pleased with it.⁷⁴

The case of Mauropous’ pupil, Michael Psellos is even more interesting. Psellos’ main historical work, the *Chonographia*, was composed in two main stages, the first from the reign of Basil II to the abdication of Isaakios I Komnenos in 1059, and the second from Constantine X to Michael VII in 1078. The inconsistency between the two sections is most apparent in the highly eulogistic account of the reign of Michael VII Doukas, which when compared to the critical viewpoint from which Psellos assesses previous emperors, is remarkably different. In order to account for this discrepancy, modern scholars have arrived at the conclusion that the author undertook to write the final section at the request of the emperors Constantine X and Michael VII, if not under

⁷¹ Procopius, *Anecdota*, p. 3.

⁷² Procopius, *Anecdota*, p. 3.

⁷³ John Mauropous, Poem 96, P. de Lagarde (ed.), *Abhandlungen der historisch-philologischen Klasse der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Göttingen 1882, repr. Amsterdam 1979: ὁ συγγραφεὺς ψεῦδος μὲν οὐκ εἴρηκέ πω, ψεύσαιο μέντ’ ἂν ἔν γε τοῖς λοιποῖς λόγοις, οὕτω φιλοῦντων τῶν κελευόντων τάδε, ὧν τοῖς ἐπαίνοις ἐντρυφῶν τὸ βιβλίον, ὁμως ἔδοξεν ἐνδεέστερον λέγειν· ἐξουσία κρότων γὰρ οὐκ οἶδεν κόρον. οὐκοῦν ἀφείσθω ταῦτα τοῖς ἐγκωμίοις, ἢ συγγραφή δὲ μὴ προχωρεῖτω πλέον· οὐκ εὐφυῶς γὰρ πρὸς τὰ τοῦ ψεύδους ἔχει.

⁷⁴ *ODB* 2, p. 1319. For Mauropous in general see A. Karpozilos, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του Ιωάννη Μαυροπόδος*, Ioannina 1982.

their active supervision. This was then appended to the first part of the *Chronographia* after the author's death.⁷⁵

To resume our discussion of Niketas, from 535/3 onward his work can only have been written after 1204, as it is at this point that Niketas begins to narrate the events of the Fourth Crusade. Van Dieten has shown that Niketas' narration had reached the year 1202, when the author was forced to flee the city in April 1204.⁷⁶ This is clearly evident in the b-text, where there is no prelude introducing the imminent calamity. The last events recorded prior to the arrival of the Fourth Crusade were triumphal victories of Alexios III over the rebels John Spyridonakes and Drobomir Chrysos (1202). After this section Niketas adds a preliminary note to the ensuing text so as to prepare the reader for what will follow, but clearly there is no continuity and in fact manuscripts RMF of the b-family relate this section as book III of the reign of Alexios III Angelos.⁷⁷

Following the disastrous events of 1204, the author, now a refugee, took his historical work with him and continued to write in exile in Selymbria and Nicaea. According to his own testimony, Niketas stayed in Selymbria from April 1204-June 1206, when he was forced to flee once again due to the devastating incursions of the Cumans, this time returning to Constantinople for six months (July-December 1206), before 'sailing to the east.'⁷⁸ Niketas, therefore, must have arrived at Nicaea in December 1206/January 1207, and it is during his time in the Bithynian capital (from his arrival in 1207 until his death in ca. 1217) that the *Historia* was elaborately revised and significantly expanded. For the final section of the work (535/3 onward) there exist three text versions: b, a, and LO. According to van Dieten, LO is the oldest of these.

⁷⁵ See discussions in: J. M. Hussey, 'Michael Psellus, The Byzantine Historian', *Speculum* 10 (1935), pp. 81-90; R. Anastasi, *Studi sulla 'Chronographia' di Michelle Psello*, Catania 1969; E. Kriaras, 'Considerazioni sul libro VII della 'Chronographia' di Michele Psello', *Orpheus* 6 (1985), pp. 370-95; M. Agati, 'Michele VII Parapinace e la *Chronographia* de Psello', *Bolletino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* n.s. 45 (1991), pp. 11-31.

⁷⁶ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCIII.

⁷⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 535/3 RMF: τόμος τρίτος τῆς βασιλείας κῦρ' Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ, ἔνθα ἡ διήγησις τῶν συμβάντων τῇ μεγαλοπόλει ἀνιαρῶν. D has a different title: βασιλείας σύγχυσις καὶ ἀρχὴ τῶν τῇ μεγαλοπόλει συμβάντων ἀνιαρῶν (in marg. τινὲς τόμον τρίτον τοῦτον γράφουσιν).

⁷⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 635/95-7 LO.

LO

The LO version, beginning only with the events of the Fourth Crusade and ending with the description of the statues melted down by the crusaders in Constantinople (535/3-636 + 647-655) has survived in its entirety in two manuscripts: *Laurentianus* IX 24 (13th century) and *Oxoniensis Bodleianus Roe* 22 (1286). It has been transmitted to us together with the *Panoplia Dogmatike*, and continues directly from the latter without a title.⁷⁹ Always according to van Dieten, Niketas wrote LO during his time in Selymbria and Constantinople, and finished it in Nicaea around 1207. He then ‘published’ it together with the *Panoplia Dogmatike*, i.e. he sent copies of both works to an anonymous friend who had asked for it.⁸⁰ The author, however, soon realised the inadequacies of the continuation of his historiographical work and began to revise it, particularly from 535 onwards, resulting in the version that we now refer to as b(revior).

Concerning LO, it must first be noted that internal evidence contradicts a date of composition as early as 1207. Since LO has come down to us together with the *Panoplia*, it can be assumed that they were written around the same time. In the preface to his theological work Niketas complains bitterly about his miserable situation in Nicaea: ‘I can barely provide nourishment for my own party and the young servants under me, as I am dwelling in a foreign land, Nicaea the metropolis of Bithynia, building wooden houses and living the remainder of my life as a wretched refugee and a miserable stranger.’⁸¹ Similar sentiments are voiced in the LO version, where Niketas tells us that he is residing amidst appalling conditions alongside Lake Askania, receiving scarcely enough aid from the authorities and being maltreated by the local population.⁸² That both the *Panoplia* and LO were written in Nicaea is clear enough, but only the historical events reported in the LO version can tell us exactly when. Although it has already been

⁷⁹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. LVII.

⁸⁰ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCI. See preface given in *Panoplia Dogmatike* (ed. van Dieten), p. 57/20.

⁸¹ *Panoplia Dogmatike* (ed. van Dieten), p. 57/16-19: ὥς μόλις τὴν συνοδίαν καὶ τὰ ὑπουργὰ μοι παιδάρια διατρέφειν δύναμαι ἐν γῇ παροικῶν ἀλλοτρία καὶ πρὸς τῇ μητρόπολει Βιθυνίας Νικαία πηξάμενος μόσυνα καὶ τὸ λείπον τοῦ βίου διατοξεύων ὥς ἀχρεῖος μετανάστης καὶ ἀμέγαρτος ἔπηλυσ.

⁸² Nik.Chon., p. 635/1ff. LO: ὅθεν καὶ παροικοῦμεν ἐν τῇ κατὰ τὴν λίμνην τὴν Ἀσκανίαν Νικαία τῆς τῶν Βιθυνῶν ἐπαρχίας προεδρευούσῃ...πλὴν οὐδὲν ἄμεινον τὰ τῆς τοπικῆς ταυτησὶ μεταβάσεως τοῖς καθ’ ἡμᾶς εἰσήνεγκαν πράγμασιν, ἀλλ’ ἐσμέν καὶ πάλιν ταῖς λύπαις ὑπέραντλοι καὶ μόνῳ διεξαγόμεθα θεῷ βραχείας τῆς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων εὐμοιροῦντες συνάρσεως.

noted that chronologically, LO goes beyond both the b and the a-text, the extent of time LO covers has been underestimated.

In the aftermath of the capture of Constantinople and the partitioning of the empire, Niketas recognised three leaders of resistance to the Latins: Theodore I Laskaris in Asia Minor⁸³, Leo Sgouros in central Greece, and Michael Komnenos Doukas in Epiros.⁸⁴ Having related the progress of the Latin conquest both in Greece and in the Asian part of the empire, Niketas lists the three leaders of resistance. He devotes three lines to Theodore Laskaris, who is introduced merely as a relative of Alexios III, and tells us that he was proclaimed emperor by the cities of the East, an event that occurred in 1205.⁸⁵ Concerning Michael Komnenos Doukas, the historian provides us with the following information: ‘and there was another [leader], son of the *sebastokrator* John, who was the uncle of Isaakios and Alexios, the emperors of the Romans, on their father’s side, and ruled the area around Nikopolis and the river Acheloos. He did not act in a cowardly manner towards the Latins but rather bravely engaged them when they sailed to Dyrrachion and proceeded ahead. Because they lacked the necessary supplies and because he surprised them in frontal attack, he won a great victory and prevailed against

⁸³ For Theodore I Laskaris, founder of the empire of Nicaea see A. Meliarakes, *Ἱστορία τοῦ βασιλείου τῆς Νικαίας καὶ τοῦ Δεσποτάτου τῆς Ἡπείρου*, Athens 1898, pp. 1-154; A. Gardner, *The Lascarids of Nicaea. The Story of an Empire in Exile*, London 1912 (repr. 1964), pp. 52-115; *ODB* 3, pp. 2039-40.

⁸⁴ Neither Michael nor his successor Theodore seem to have used the name Angelos, inherited from their grandfather, Constantine Angelos, perhaps because they preferred the more reputable names of Doukas and Komnenos: See D.M. Nicol, ‘The Fourth Crusade and the Greek and Latin Empires, 1204-61’, in *Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, Cambridge 1966, p. 296ff. For general bibliography: Idem, *The Despotate of Epiros (1204-1267)*, Oxford 1957, pp. 1-112; Meliarakes, *Νίκαια καὶ Ἡπειρος*, pp. 48-129; L. Stiernon, ‘Les Origines du despotat d’Épire’, *REB* 27 (1959), pp. 90-126; D.I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*, London 1968, pp. 89ff.; *ODB* 2, p. 1362, 3, p. 2042; Varzos, II, pp. 548-637, 669-89.

⁸⁵ Nik.Chon., p.626/53-56. Theodore’s proclamation followed directly and most probably as a result of his victory over Manuel Mavrozomes in the b-text, that is in the spring/summer of 1205: ὁ δὲ Λάσκαρις Θεόδωρος...ἀποκρουσάμενος ἐκεῖνον τὸ ἐξέρυθρον πέδιλον ὑποδύεται καὶ βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων ὑφ’ ὅλων τῶν ἑώων ἀναγορεύεται πόλεων. In LO it comes on 631/16ff: ὁ γὰρ Λάσκαρις Θεόδωρος κηδεστῆς ὢν ἐπὶ θυγατρὶ τοῦ ἐξ Ἀγγέλων βασιλεύοντος Ἀλεξίου τὰ πρὸς ἑω περιέθαλπε πόλεις ἐκτρίβων πρὸς πόλεμον καὶ ὑπ’ αὐτῶν βασιλεὺς ἀναγορευόμενος. For the date see: P. B. Sinogowitz, ‘Über das byzantinische Kaisertum nach dem vierten Kreuzzuge, 1204-1205’, *BZ* 45 (1952), pp. 344-56; Gounarides, ‘Ἡ Χρονολογία τῆς Αναγόρευσης καὶ τῆς στέψης τοῦ Θεοδώρου Α΄ τοῦ Λασκάρεως’, *Σύμμ* 6 (1985), p. 69; A. Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East: its Relations with the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum in Asia Minor, the Armenians of Cilicia and the Mongols, A.D. c.1192-1237*, Thessaloniki 1981, pp. 61, 86 ff. Also van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 147-48.

many thousands, as many as the bishop of Saisos had recruited from Italy and gathered from all the Latin lands to be shipped to the borders of the Romans.⁸⁶

By the bishop of 'Saisos', Niketas means Nivelon de Chérisy, bishop of Soissons (ca. 1176-1207) and chief prelate of the army of the Fourth Crusade. In 1205 Nivelon was named archbishop of Thessaloniki and granted a special papal license to remain simultaneously bishop of Soissons.⁸⁷ When the Latins met with disaster at Andrianople (March-April 1205), Nivelon was sent back to the West to seek reinforcements.⁸⁸ He died in Apulia in 1207, still labouring to return to Greece with the enlisted soldiers he had collected.⁸⁹ From Niketas' description it appears that the Latins did manage to raise a substantial force, which was sent to the east, only to be cut down by the Greeks of Epiros. The battle described cannot be correlated with any that are known to us through other sources,⁹⁰ and this is not surprising considering that the history of the Byzantine separatist state of Epiros is so poorly documented.⁹¹ However, this battle can only be dated to after 1207, but not much later, since the forces that the bishop of Soissons had enlisted seemed to have been already assembled at that date.

The career of the third Greek leader, Leo Sgouros receives detailed treatment by the historian, who ends this section by relating the death of Sgouros together with the capture of Akrokorinth by the Latins. Niketas further informs us that after these events Sgouros' wife was sent to the east (i.e. to Nicaea) and that at the *present time* Nauplion

⁸⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 631/16ff LO: ἄλλος δὲ τις ἐξ ὁσφύος φῦς Ἰωάννου τοῦ σεβαστοκράτορος, ὅστις θεῖος ἦν πρὸς πατρός Ἰσαακίου καὶ Ἀλεξίου τῶν ὁμογνίων αὐτοκρατόρων Ῥωμαίων, τὰ περὶ Νικόπολιν χειρίζων καὶ τὸν ποταμὸν Ἀχελῶον, οὐδὲ οὗτος ἀγεννῶς ἀντεφέρετο τοῖς Λατίνοις ἀλλὰ καὶ μάλα γενναίως, καταχθεῖσιν εἰς τὸ Δυρράχιον καὶ χωροῦσιν ἐς τὰ πρόσω· πῇ μὲν σπάνει τῶν ἀναγκαίων, πῇ δὲ καὶ ἐνωπίῳ μάχῃ τὴν νίκην λαμπρὰ ἀνεδήσατο καὶ πολλὰς κατηγωνίσαστο χιλιάδας, ὅσας ὁ Σαῖσου ἐπίσκοπος ἐξ Ἰταλίας στρατολογήσας καὶ ὅπη δὴ Λατινικῶν μερῶν συλλεξάμενος εἰς τὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ὅρια διεπλώισατο.

⁸⁷ I have made this identification on the basis of the information given in A. J. Andrea, *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade*, Leiden 2000, pp. 223-38: *Concerning the land of Jerusalem and the Means by which Relics were carried to this church from the City of Constantinople*, by the Anonymous of Soissons. This is a neglected source for the relics stolen from Constantinople and transferred to Soissons by Nivelon de Chérisy himself.

⁸⁸ Villehardouin, p. 129.

⁸⁹ Andrea, *Sources for the Fourth Crusade*, p. 225

⁹⁰ A fleet from Venice had landed in Dyrrachion in the spring of 1205 and was victorious in capturing the stronghold. The Venetians retained Dyrrachion until it capitulated to an attack by Michael Komnenos Doukas in the early years of the second decade of the thirteenth century. See Meliarakes, *Νίκαια καὶ Ἡπειρος*, pp. 55-57; Nicol, *Epiros*, pp. 37-38.

⁹¹ Nicol, *Epiros*, pp. 38.

was held by a certain Gabriel, a relative, who appears to have been Sgouros' brother.⁹² The death of Sgouros is generally agreed upon to have taken place in 1208, probably in the second part of that year.⁹³ Akrokorinth capitulated to the Latins in 1209,⁹⁴ and Nauplion in 1210/11.⁹⁵ Therefore the composition of this passage should be dated to no earlier than ca. 1210. Consequently this provides with a *terminus post quem* for the composition of LO, which in all likelihood was composed in the first years of the second decade of the thirteenth century. This raises certain problems that concern the chronology of the versions of the text after 1204 as well the inadequacies displayed by this version.

The position of LO in relation to both the b and the a-texts is highly problematic. As already noted above, van Dieten has suggested that LO is the oldest version of *τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν*.⁹⁶ This view goes against the earlier opinion of Friedrich Wilken, who saw LO as an epitome of the a-text.⁹⁷ Such fundamentally opposing views can be explained by the fact that LO displays certain characteristics, which clearly distinguish it from both the b and the a-texts, and at the same time make it extremely difficult to integrate in the revision process. The mere fact that LO has passed on to us with the *Panoplia Dogmatike* differentiates this version from the *Historia* as it has survived in the a-b versions.

LO begins with the arrival of the fleet of Fourth Crusade in June 1203 with the sentence: ἐνταύθα ἡ ἄλωσις τῆς πόλεως καὶ τινὰ τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα συμβάντων

⁹² Nik.Chon., p. 611/30-35 LO: ὡς δὲ μετὰ καιρὸν ἐτεθνήκει, ἐγκρατεῖς παρὰ δόξαν Λατῖνοι καὶ τοῦ Ἀκροκόρινθου γίνονται. τῷ τοι καὶ ἡ τούτου σύζυγος φαμένη χαίρειν ταῖς ἐκεῖσε διατριβαῖς ἐς τὴν ἔω διαπλώζεται. καὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὡς ἱστὸς ἐπ' ὄρους καὶ σημαίας ἐπὶ βουνοῦ τὸ Ναύπλιον παρὰ τινος Γαβριήλ, κασιγνήτου τοῦ Σγουροῦ, κατεχόμενον.

⁹³ See J. Longnon, *L'empire Latin de Constantinople et la Principauté de Morée*, Paris 1949, p. 92; A. Bon, *La Morée franque. Recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la Principauté d'Achaïe, 1204-1430*, I, Paris 1969, p. 68; J. Hoffmann, *Rudimente von Territorialstaaten im byzantinischen Reich (1071-1210). Untersuchungen über Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen und ihr Verhältnis zu Kaiser und Reich*, Munich 1974, p. 59; A. Savvides, 'A Note on the Death of Leo Sgurus in A.D. 1208', *BMGS* 12 (1988), pp. 289-95 and the recent monograph by F. Vlachopoulou, *Λέων Σγουρός: Ο Βίος και η Πολιτεία του Βυζαντινού ἀρχοντα της βορειανατολικής Πελοποννήσου στις αρχές του 13^{ου} αιώνα*, Thessaloniki 2002, p. 110 ff.

⁹⁴ Longnon, *L'empire*, p. 240; M. Kordoses, 'Ιστορικά και τοπογραφικά προβλήματα κατά τις πολεμικές συγκρούσεις της πρώτης περιόδου της Φραγκοκρατίας στη Νότια Ελλάδα (1204-1262)', *Ιστοριογεωγραφικά* 1 (1985-86), pp. 118-23.

⁹⁵ Kordoses, *Ιστορικά*, pp. 124-27.

⁹⁶ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. XCV-XCIX.

⁹⁷ F. Wilken, 'Zerstörung der Kunstwerke zu Constantinopel (nach Nicetas)', in *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, Tl. 5, Leipzig 1829, p. CVII.

and thereafter picks up on the first sentence found in the b-a texts.⁹⁸ In versions b and a, the arrival of the fleet occurs in the middle of book II of the reign of Alexios III, where it is simply part of the narration. The second reign of Isaakios II Angelos together with his son Alexios IV, as well as that of Alexios V are related in two different books in the b-a texts, and accorded the appropriate titles. In the LO version no such titles are found.⁹⁹ The final section of the work, dealing with events after the fall of Constantinople has a title in all three versions, but while in the b-a texts, this is more or less similar, focusing on ‘events after the fall’, in LO it is simply recorded in the margin as τόμος δεύτερος.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the long and eloquent introduction of this section of the work in the b-a texts is missing in LO, where the author begins by merely stating εἶχε μὲν οὕτω ταῦτα, καὶ ἡ Κωνσταντίνου καλλίπολις.¹⁰¹ Finally, the *De Statuis* fragment is again accorded its own title in V, but not in LO, where it simply forms the last part of book II.¹⁰²

One of the most curious features of LO – that is if we disregard its size and the fact that it begins in 1203 – is the chronological order of the events described. In the van Dieten edition (as compared to the order of events in b and a) LO displays the following sequence: 585/58-603/23, 612/36-627/84, 631/17-636/65, 628/15-631/16, 605/65-608/50, 604/53-59, 608/50-611/30-35, 647 ff.¹⁰³ This order of events leads to a great deal of chronological confusion. For example, the events in Greece after the conquest of Constantinople until about February 1205 are narrated in LO, but only after the events in Asia Minor and Thrace from 1206-1207 have been dealt with (605/65ff.). The siege of Didymoteichos and the death of Patriarch John X Kamateros, May/June 1206 and 26 June respectively, and also the siege of Andrianople in 1207 can be found in LO before the battle of Rhusion and the conquest of Apros in February/March 1206 (632/22ff, 636/22ff, 628/15ff.).¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 535/3 LO.

⁹⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 549/1-3, 565/1-3 LO.

¹⁰⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 583/1-3 LO.

¹⁰¹ Nik.Chon., pp. 583/4-85/7 om. LO.

¹⁰² Nik.Chon., p.647/1-3 LO. Although here the author does add a preliminary note, which van Dieten has placed in the main text: ἵνα δὲ μὴ μακροτέρα τῇ ἱστορίᾳ χρώμενοι πολυπλοκωτέρας ἐντεῦθεν τὰς λύπας κτώμεθα, ταυτὶ μὲν παρήσομεν, ἐκεῖνα δ’ ἐν ἐπιτομῇ τῷ λόγῳ δώσομεν.

¹⁰³ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XXVI.

¹⁰⁴ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCVII.

In addition to this chronological confusion, one may notice the lack of information on Constantinople and Asia Minor. Regarding Theodore I Laskaris, the only information that Niketas offers us is that the son-in-law of Alexios III was recognised as emperor in the East (631 ff. LO). Neither Manuel Mavrozomes¹⁰⁵ nor the Komnenoi of Trebizond¹⁰⁶ are so much as mentioned in LO. Moreover, only towards the end of the work does the author refer to Constantinople, but here again, he narrates events almost in reverse chronological order.¹⁰⁷ Niketas' editor attempts to explain these deficiencies with reference to the author's circumstances at the time of composition: when Niketas began writing LO in Selymbria he had only one source of information and thus restricted himself to events in Thrace and Macedonia. His move to Nicaea at about the end of 1206/beginning of 1207 enabled him to receive information about Greece from his brother, Michael. The fact that he does not dwell on events in the east may be explained by the wealth of information he was receiving about Greece.¹⁰⁸

This hypothesis can hardly be plausible. In order for it to stand, one has to assume first that Niketas could not receive information from his brother in Selymbria (why not?), and second that he later simply ignored the eastern part of the empire in order to concentrate on Greece. In a more recent article van Dieten adds that the chronological confusion in LO could also have originated from an error of transmission (i.e. the changes that Niketas had indicated when he revised the archetype were not clear and thus the copyist followed the old chronological order).¹⁰⁹ This seems a more reasonable explanation for the problematic chronology. It does not, however, explain the reason for the neglect of Theodore I Laskaris and Asia Minor, which we believe is very significant in coming to grips with the LO version.

This omission can in the first place be explained if we view LO as an epitome of the events occurring after the arrival of the Fourth Crusade. That Niketas intended LO to

¹⁰⁵ For this individual see *ODB* 2, pp. 1319-20; A. Savvides, *Βυζαντινά στασιαστικά και αυτονομιστικά κινήματα στα Δωδεκάνησα και στη Μικρά Ασία, 1189- c. 1240 μ.Χ.*, Athens 1987, pp. 231-45.

¹⁰⁶ For the Komnenoi of Trebizond see A. Vasiliev, 'The Foundation of the Empire of Trebizond (1204-1222)', *Speculum* 11 (1936), pp. 3-37; A. Savvides, 'Οι Μεγάλοι Κομνηνοί του Πόντου και οι Σελτζούκοι του Ρούμ (Ικονίου) την περίοδο 1205/6-1222', *ΑΠ* 39 (1984), pp. 169-93; Idem, *Κινήματα*, pp. 260-300; *ODB* 1, pp. 63-64, 589-90.

¹⁰⁷ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCVII.

¹⁰⁸ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCVII.

¹⁰⁹ van Dieten, 'Niketas Choniates und Codex Parisinus Graecus', pp. 55-56.

be an epitome can be confirmed by the opening lines of this version ἡ ἄλωσις τῆς πόλεως καὶ τινὰ τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα συμβάντων. If we compare this to the title of b ἱστορία τῶν μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν συμβάντων or even a τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως συμβάντα, we immediately realise that Niketas never planned LO to be a detailed account of events, but merely a ‘summary’. But why is LO a summary of events in Greece and not in Asia Minor? Given the fact that we have arrived at a date of composition in ca. 1210, it is not likely that Niketas, who by that time was well established at Nicaea, was not informed of events in the eastern part of the empire. The omission of the east is most likely related to the author himself and his situation in Nicaea rather than an informant. We have already seen the historian complain about his living circumstances in LO. These complaints become more specific on one particular occasion: ‘our transfer to the east has in no way improved our situation, but we are again flooded with sorrow and are supported only by God, receiving no assistance from the emperor.’¹¹⁰ Did the author’s bitterness cause him to leave out an extensive report about the east or could this omission be related to the anonymous friend to whom Niketas sent LO and the *Panoplia Dogmatike*?¹¹¹

Concerning the chronological order of the versions, it is of paramount importance that b is closer to LO with regard to the events that occurred between July 1203 and April 1204 (535/3-582/46), but has more in common with a in the section τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν (583ff.).¹¹² It should also be noted that like version b, LO is significantly less critical of emperors and high-ranking government officials than a.¹¹³ From this van Dieten has concluded that b takes an intermediary position between LO and a in the composition of the *Historia* after 1204, and therefore presents us with a sequence of LO-b-a. This seems the most logical conclusion one can draw. However, there are certain problems with van Dieten’s theory. First of all, the editor assumes that because Niketas

¹¹⁰ Nik. Chon., 635/7-10 O: πλὴν οὐδὲν ἄμεινον τὰ τῆς τοπικῆς ταυτησὶ μεταβάσεως τοῖς καθ’ ἡμᾶς εἰσήνεγκαν πράγμασιν, ἀλλ’ ἐσμέν καὶ πάλιν ταῖς λύπαις ὑπέραντλοι καὶ μόνῳ διεξαγόμεθα θεῷ μηδὲ τῇ ἐκ βασιλέως ἀμοιροῦντες συνάρσεως.

¹¹¹ I do not wish to speculate about his identity, but it is certainly of great interest to note that only mss. PLO include the critical passage about the *megas doux*, Michael Stryphnos (541/41), brother-in-law of Empress Euphrosyne Kamatere and *megas doux* under Alexios III. If we recall, it was this individual who was responsible for ousting Constantine Mesopotamites from his position in government (491/17 ff.) and we know that Mesopotamites was the owner of ms. L.

¹¹² van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCVI.

¹¹³ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCVI.

did not write LO under propitious conditions (in Selymbria – Constantinople – Nicaea, 1204-1207), he later realised the deficiencies of his work, which was written chronologically too close to the events it described and revised the whole, paying particular attention to 583 onwards and leaving the bulk that was written prior to 1204 unchanged, i.e. version b in its final form. However, from the date of composition that we have established here, this hypothesis can no longer be maintained, as it appears that LO was written at a time when the author was already well established in Nicaea and chronologically not so close to the events described.

Second, van Dieten has not indicated a date for the time of composition of final segment of b (τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν). But as we shall see in the following section, version b-after 1204 can be securely dated to no later than the end of 1206/beginning of 1207. This is a clear chronological indication that in the process of revision after 1204, version b preceded LO, which was written some years later. Third, as has already been pointed out, Niketas' treatment of Theodore I Laskaris seems to be of the utmost importance in understanding LO. The Nicaean emperor receives Niketas' praise on two separate occasions in the b and LO texts, which are missing in version a. These references concern Laskaris' courageous stance against the Latins in 1203.¹¹⁴ However, in the section τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν, Laskaris is simply ignored in LO. This omission would not make sense if b was taken over from LO, for why would Niketas, if he indeed wrote LO first, praise Laskaris in the beginning of the work and overlook him at the end? But it does make sense if we assume that for section 535/3-582 (July 1203-April 1204), Niketas utilised the b-text as a source for his composition of LO and this would explain the identical references to Laskaris. For the section τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν, he simply continued to write LO 'independently'. Possibly due to a new set of circumstances in Niketas' life, the author no longer felt the need to 'flatter' Laskaris, who is barely mentioned, while the eastern part of the empire receives much less detailed treatment than the west, even though the author, by virtue of his location at Nicaea, was undoubtedly in a much better position to obtain information of events in the east.

A further example could serve to illustrate a process of successive revision with a sequence of b-LO-a. The withdrawal of Alexios III before the Latin army outside the

¹¹⁴ Nik.Chon., pp. 544/19, 546/65 add. bLO.

walls of Constantinople on 17 July 1203 is given three different explanations (546/65-68): νῦν δὲ τὸ εὐπτόητον τοῦ στρατεύματος καὶ τὸ μὴ εὐθαρσὲς καὶ φιλοκίνδυνον εἰς ἀτυχὲς πτῶμα φερομένην τὴν πόλιν: b.

νῦν δὲ τὸ εὐπτόητον τοῦ στρατεύματος καὶ τὸ μὴ εὐθαρσὲς τοῦ κρατοῦντος καὶ φιλοκίνδυνον εἰς ἀτυχὲς πτῶμα φερομένην τὴν πόλιν: LO.

νῦν δὲ ἡ ἐνδελεχὴς τῆς φυγῆς ἔννοια καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν τὸ εὐπτόητον τοῦ τί δεῖ ἐπὶ καιροῦ ποιεῖν ἐξέκρουσε τὸν Ἀλέξιον: a.

At this point we shall restrict ourselves to the following observations: 1) It is clear that LO stems from b and is very close to it; 2) It appears that Niketas' stance towards Alexios III hardens as the process of revision progresses.

Finally, we should ask ourselves why Niketas wrote LO in the first place. From the preface to the *Panoplia Dogmatike*, we are informed that the author wrote this work upon the request of a friend.¹¹⁵ Since LO continues directly from the *Panoplia* without a title, it can be assumed that Niketas' friend also requested an epitome of historical events beginning with the arrival of the fleet of the Fourth Crusade in 1203.¹¹⁶ Presumably, this friend already possessed the earlier sections of Niketas' historical work, since LO simply appears to continue the narration.¹¹⁷ In light of these considerations it does not appear that LO was a personal endeavour of the author, but rather a work composed on the request of an anonymous, but most likely very powerful and influential 'friend'. The uncritical character of the LO-text suggests that at the time of composition in the early years of the second decade of the thirteenth century our historian was at still somehow connected, if not dependent upon influential individuals closely tied to the regime. This can be confirmed by a closer look at b(revior) after 1204.

¹¹⁵ *Panoplia Dogmatike* (ed. van Dieten), p. 57/20.

¹¹⁶ In general, epitomes and simplified versions of histories were produced, but the shortened account would retain the name of the original author. In Niketas' case, an epitome taken from the b-text already exists in three manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It has, however, been argued that on occasion the historians themselves produced simplified versions and/or epitomes of their longer works, as in the case of Michael Psellos and Michael Attaleiates. For Psellos see: K. Snipes, 'A Newly-discovered History of the Roman Emperors by Michael Psellos', *JÖB* 32/3 (1982), pp. 53-61. For Attaleiates: N.G. Wilson, 'The Libraries of the Byzantine World', *GRBS* 8 (1967), p. 64.

¹¹⁷ As argued by van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. C.

b(revior)-after 1204

The final section of version b can be separated into two parts. The first extends from the middle of book II of Alexios III (535/3) to the end of the reign of Alexios V Doukas (582) and the second, τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν, continues the narration from the capture of Constantinople in April 1204 to the events of the Greek rebellion against the Latins in February/March 1205 (582-614/7-10). What is immediately striking here is that while the first part follows the structure of the original text, i.e. it is separated into books in accordance with imperial reigns; part two is segregated along chronological and geographical lines. We believe that this difference in narrative structure was due to the fact that there was no clearly established imperial reign to take the centre stage of the narration. Moreover, the author does not simply continue his previous work, but feels compelled to prefix it with a title: τοῦ αὐτοῦ λογοθέτου τῶν σεκρέτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κρίσεων Νικήτα τοῦ Χωνιάτου ἱστορία τῶν μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν συμβάντων τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως,¹¹⁸ almost as if he were writing something to be distinguished from the previous sections.

This is a work of a more personal nature, with the author no longer just an eyewitness, but taking on the role of the protagonist and relating in detail his own sufferings.¹¹⁹ It is this history of events after the fall of Constantinople, which was aborted on 614/7-10. At its inception it appears to have been meticulously planned, as Niketas commences with what can be described as his ultimate judgment on the collapse of Byzantium.¹²⁰ He then goes on to relate in sequence events in Greece and Asia Minor, switching back and forth between the two theatres of war as he moves on chronologically. His narration, however, ends abruptly around February/March 1205, for Niketas first tells us he is going to narrate the Greek revolt against Latin rule in Macedonia and Thrace (beginning February 1205), but then breaks off with a sentence that betrays a sudden change in his own circumstances. This change was none other than the author's move to Nicaea at the end of 1206/beginning of 1207, as is clearly indicated by his closing remarks: 'But because I have grown tired of narrating the misfortunes that

¹¹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 583/1-3 b.

¹¹⁹ Nik.Chon., esp. pp. 586/79-594/80.

¹²⁰ Nik.Chon., pp.583/3-586/57. This section will be analyzed in detail in the following chapters.

befell on my own people, and since I am already completely immersed in preparing for my transfer to the east, hence I will desist from the narrative and put an end to the vertigo of evils I have presented.'¹²¹ It thus clear that Niketas wrote the final section of version b during his sojourn in Selymbria (April 1204-June 1206) and Constantinople (July-December 1206).¹²²

This supposition can be confirmed by the use of the titles *basileus* and *despotes*, for in version b Niketas still accords Alexios III Angelos the title of *basileus*,¹²³ while he refers to Theodore Laskaris as *despotes* (and more specifically τὸν εὐτυχέστατον δεσπότην), son-in-law of the emperor.¹²⁴ It should not be forgotten that Theodore Laskaris may have been proclaimed emperor in the spring of 1205, but his official coronation did not take place until 1208.¹²⁵ In this context it is significant to note that Niketas' title testifies to a history of events rather than a history of the reign of Theodore Laskaris. Indeed, the historian's attitude to these two individuals in this section of the b-text is of critical significance. As mentioned earlier, Theodore Laskaris receives the historian's praise on two occasions in the bLO texts. The first one comes in book II of the reign of Alexios III and relates Laskaris' courageous stance against the Latins in the early days of July 1203: 'at this time the war was conducted by the emperor's son-in-law,

¹²¹ Nik.Chon., p.614/7-10: ἀλλ' ἀπείρηκα τὰς τῶν οἰκείων συμφορὰς γραφόμενος, ἤδη δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐς ἔω μεταβάσεως ἅπας γίνομαι, ἐνταῦθα τοῦ λέγειν σχάσας τοῦ τῶν κακῶν ἰλίγγου πεπαύσομαι.

¹²² I think Niketas' closing remarks have been misinterpreted by van Dieten. His own translation reads as follows: 'Aber da ich es müde bin, das Schicksal meines Volkes aufzuzeichnen und mich völlig dem Osten des Reiches widmen will, wo ich nun lebe, höre ich auf zu schreiben und setze dem Wirbel des Unheils ein Ende (*Biographie*, p. 48). From this reading, van Dieten understood that Niketas was already in Nicaea (and perhaps this is one of the reasons why he subsequently dated LO before b). On my reading Niketas is still preparing for his move to the Bithynian capital. In this context, it is significant to note that Niketas did not make a spontaneous decision to move to the Bithynian capital. He and the Belissariotes had most likely planned their migration in advance with the aim of entering the service of Theodore Laskaris (Michael Choniates, I, p. 354/8-11 informs us that they left together). Therefore it is reasonable to assume that whilst in Constantinople (July-December 1206) Niketas suddenly received the news that he would be welcome in Nicaea and decided to end his historical work.

¹²³ Nik.Chon., pp. 608/48, 612/41 b.

¹²⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 602/93 b. For the title see G. Ostrogorsky, 'Urum-Despotes. Die Anfänge der Despoteswürde in Byzanz', *BZ* 44 (1951), pp. 448-60.

¹²⁵ Most researchers are in agreement on this date: See A. Heisenberg, *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des lateinischen Kaisertums und der Kirchenunion: II. Die Unionsverhandlungen vom 30. August 1206. Patriarchenwahl und Kaiserkrönung in Nikaia 1208, Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse, Munich 1923, pp. 10-12; Ai. Christophilopoulou, 'Εκλογή, 'Αναγόρευσις καὶ Στέψις τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ Αὐτοκράτορος, Athens 1956, pp. 170-75. But see Gounarides who rejects this date and places the coronation of Laskaris on Easter day 1207: 'Η Χρονολογία', pp. 59-71.*

Theodore Laskaris. Furiously engaging in the struggle, he appeared to the Latins as one of the most martial of Roman men on account of his deeds'.¹²⁶ The second is a remark made by the author concerning the withdrawal of the Roman troops when confronted with the Latin ranks in front of the land walls of Constantinople (17 July 1203): 'a work of deliverance would have occurred had the troops moved uniformly against the enemy *or* had the emperor conceded [leadership of] the conflict to his relative Laskaris to vigorously engage the Latins'.¹²⁷ These references were subsequently removed from version a.

It is of equal significance that this phenomenon also occurs in Niketas' treatment of Alexios III, who even after the fall of Constantinople is treated with a characteristic sympathy, which may even be viewed as compassion on the part of the historian.¹²⁸ Much the same can be observed in Niketas' treatment of Alexios III in the *Panoplia Dogmatike*,¹²⁹ a text, which as we have seen, precedes the historical events narrated in LO in the respective manuscripts, but has more in common with b than any other version of the *Historia*.¹³⁰ In version a, this is no longer the case. In fact, both Alexios III and Theodore I are relentlessly condemned by Niketas on numerous occasions.¹³¹ As we have seen, at the time Niketas was writing his closing remarks in version b, he was preparing his move to Nicaea, presumably in order to enter into the service of Laskaris. That Niketas did establish some sort of connection with the court of Laskaris at Nicaea is evidenced primarily by his authorship of a number of encomia dedicated to this emperor, including the celebrated *Selention*, delivered on the occasion of the beginning of Lent in

¹²⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 544/19 add. bLO: καὶ μάλιστα ἡνίκα διεστρατήγει τὸν πόλεμον ὁ τοῦ βασιλέως γαμβρὸς Θεόδωρος ὁ Λάσκαρις· οὗτος γὰρ ῥαγδαιότερον συμπλεκόμενος εἶναι καὶ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις ἀρείκοις ἄνδρας τοῖς Λατίνοις ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἐξέφαινε.

¹²⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 546/65 add. bLO: ἢ τῷ κηδεστῇ Λάσκαρι τὴν συμπλοκὴν συγκεχώρηκεν συμμῖξαι τοῖς Λατίνοις σφαδάζοντι.

¹²⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 536/22-23, 538/67-69, 545/54, 546/57-59, 65-68, 72, 556/80-81, 612/41-45 b LO (but see important difference concerning the status of Alexios between b and LO in this final reference in Appendix II)

¹²⁹ *Panoplia Dogmatike* (ed. Eustratiades), p. κβ': ὁ γὰρ Ἰσαακίου κασίγνητος, ᾧ ἡ κλήσις Ἀλέξιος, αὐταρχήσας, ἡπίως τῶν πραγμάτων ἥπτετο καὶ οὔτε τὰ εἰς τὸν πόλεμον ἀπρομήθευτος ἦν καὶ ῥύδην καὶ ἀκαθέκτως φερόμενος, οὔτε φιλοπράγμων περὶ τὰ δόγματα.

¹³⁰ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCII. This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that Niketas began writing the *Panoplia Dogmatike* in Selymbria (van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 46-47) when he was still engaged in the composition of the b-text.

¹³¹ Nik.Chon., especially harsh criticism on p. 625/28-46 (on Theodore Laskaris). The criticism of Alexios III will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

February 1208.¹³² We have two encomia dated earlier than this – to the year 1207.¹³³ Niketas' last surviving encomium to Laskaris dates to 1211, and was written on the occasion of the latter's triumphant victory over the Seljuk Turks in the battle of Antioch.¹³⁴

In the year 1213/14 we still find Niketas in the service of Laskaris. The historian wrote a letter to Theodore I's uncle, Basil Kamateros,¹³⁵ who was to be sent to Sis in order to escort the future bride of the emperor, Philippa (a niece of the Rupenid ruler of Lesser Armenia Leo II) back to Nicaea. Niketas, who was apparently to accompany Kamateros on this mission, excuses himself from the task because of other preoccupations.¹³⁶ Since Laskaris' first wife, Anna died in 1213, Niketas can only have written the aforementioned letter after this date.¹³⁷ So it appears that Niketas, in one capacity or another seems to have been in the service of Laskaris from his arrival at Nicaea at the end of 1206/beginning of 1207 to at least the year 1214, if not later.

However, in the early days of the Nicaean empire the position of Laskaris was anomalous. His father-in-law, Alexios III had not relinquished his claim to the throne and Laskaris, who was only recognised as emperor by the Greeks in western Asia Minor, had not been crowned.¹³⁸ The thirteenth-century historian, George Akropolites gives us a glimpse into this delicate situation when he relates that the Prouseans accepted Laskaris as emperor 'in place of his father-in-law'.¹³⁹ This vacillating state of affairs must have placed Niketas in a difficult position, as he was still expecting to play an active role in political affairs. His solution was neutrality; his praise of Laskaris on the one hand, and

¹³² van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 140-43. For the text: *Orationes et epistulae*, 13, pp. 120-28.

¹³³ van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 143-55, 162-65. For the texts: *Orationes et Epistulae*, 14, pp. 129-47 and 17, pp. 176-85.

¹³⁴ For this battle see Niketas' own panegyric to Laskaris in *Orationes et epistulae*, 16, pp. 170-76. For dating and discussion: Gardner, *The Lascarids of Nicaea*, pp. 82-84; Meliarakes, *Νίκαια καὶ Ἡπειρος*, pp. 81-83; van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 161-62; Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*, pp. 101-11 (with partial Eng. trans. of Niketas' panegyric).

¹³⁵ On Basil Kamateros, one of the most powerful men at the court of Laskaris see: Michael Choniates, II, pp. 257-61; Angold, *Byzantine Government*, pp. 62, 70-71. This individual and his relationship to Niketas will be discussed later on.

¹³⁶ *Orationes et epistulae*, 11, pp. 216-17

¹³⁷ van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 182-86; Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*, p. 95.

¹³⁸ Angold, *Byzantine Government*, p. 13; Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*, pp. 54-90.

¹³⁹ Akropolites, pp. 10-11. For Laskaris' initial difficulties in trying to gain recognition see *Orationes et epistulae*, 14, pp. 131/12-132/6 and Villehardouin, p. 110, who states that 'Laskaris laid claim to the land in his wife's right'; R. Macrides, 'A Translation and Historical Commentary of George Akropolites' History', PhD Dissertation (King's College London) 1978, p. 206.

his sympathy towards Alexios on the other, point to his uncertainty of a final resolution, and consequently confirm that our historian wrote the final section of the b-text before the date of Laskaris' coronation in 1208. This is the reason why Alexios III Komnenos is still Emperor of the Romans and why the structure of this part of the text is segregated along chronological and geographical lines.

a(uctior)

A most peculiar feature of the *Historia* is the existence of passages prior to 535/3 (arrival of the fleet of the Fourth Crusade in 1203) that can hardly be dated before the fall of Constantinople. These are particular passages which are only contained in a(uctior).¹⁴⁰ Niketas' editor has already drawn attention to the supplementary character of the relevant passages, which will be discussed at length in the following chapter. At the moment an example may suffice: at 203/75ff. Niketas praises Manuel I Komnenos for successfully countering the threat posed to the empire by the Latins, for later events demonstrated that the 'ship of state' almost sank after the death of this wise helmsman. This sentence not only presupposes the catastrophe of 1204, but may also be taken to allude to the rebuilding of the state of Nicaea.¹⁴¹ Apart from this, the remainder of the passage contains criticism of the emperor, thus contradicting the praise that had gone just before (203/58ff.). This, of course, would not make sense if both passages were written at the same time. However, it is perfectly reasonable to view the passage beginning on 203/75 as a later addition stemming from a better understanding of Manuel's policies afforded to the author with the benefit of hindsight.

A(uctior) represents the final revision of the text undertaken by the author in the closing years of his life. Because this version remains unfinished, it can be assumed that Niketas died before he had a chance to complete it. This can be concluded from a comparison with the skilful endings of the first main part of the work on 579/82-582/46 and with LO 653/26-655/65. Version a, on the contrary, ends abruptly with the expedition of the Latin Emperor Baldwin against the Cumans and the Vlachs (August-

¹⁴⁰ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCIV.

¹⁴¹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCIV.

November 1206).¹⁴² From the beginning, this version manifests clear signs of having been carefully planned and thoroughly executed. Niketas revises the entire text – from beginning to end – in a cautious and assiduous manner, paying particular attention to details. Several episodes are only to be found in the a-text, while for those passages that b and a have in common, a offers considerably more information.¹⁴³ One should also note the more precise dates given in a;¹⁴⁴ the attention paid to forward and back references, for which there is usually, if not always, a corresponding passage; the correction of errors and the simplification of complex sentences.¹⁴⁵

Version a is separated into three parts: the first χρονική διήγησις τοῦ Χωνειάτου κύρ Νικήτα ἀρχομένη ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Ἰωάννη τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ καὶ λήγουσα μέχρι τῆς ἀλώσεως τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (1-582); the second: τοῦ αὐτοῦ Χωνειάτου τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως συμβάντα τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις (583-646- unfinished); and third: τοῦ αὐτοῦ μακαρίτου κύρ Νικήτα τοῦ Χωνειάτου ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἱστορίας τῆς περὶ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (647-655). We can immediately observe the significance that the capture of Constantinople assumes in the titles; as the culmination of the first section and as the point of reference of the second. This clearly indicates the reorientation of the historical narrative.

At this point, however, we have to make a distinction between the first two parts and the third part of the work. We can recall that in its original form the final section (*De Statuis*), formed part of the LO text.¹⁴⁶ It seems to have been incorporated into the *Historia* proper after the author's death as evidenced, among other things, by the title, i.e. τοῦ αὐτοῦ μακαρίτου.¹⁴⁷ Although Niketas certainly used sections of LO in the composition of the a-text,¹⁴⁸ he never intended *De Statuis* to be included into the larger work. This can be illustrated by the reuse in a of the following passage in LO: The

¹⁴² van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCV.

¹⁴³ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCV; See the revisions recorded in Appendix II.

¹⁴⁴ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCV: Nik.Chon., pp. 462/65-6, 493/63-4, 499/59-60, 514/36.

¹⁴⁵ Version a will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

¹⁴⁶ Apart from LO, this fragment is included only in the final section of V (designated V^a by van Dieten) and Z (Marcianus Graecus XI 22, 13/14th centuries), containing a compendium of Byzantine authors. See van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LIII-LVI.

¹⁴⁷ In his English translation of Niketas' history, Harry Magoulias interprets this phrase 'of the same blessed': *City of Byzantium*, p. 357. This does not convey the original meaning of the phrase, which should instead be taken to read "of the deceased".

¹⁴⁸ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. XCVIII-XCIX.

melting down of the large equestrian statue at the Forum Tauri comes near the end of LO, in the section where Niketas provides us with a description of the statues destroyed by the Latins in Constantinople either for financial reasons or simply out of greed.¹⁴⁹ In version a, the melting of this statue is placed earlier in the narrative and interpreted as a precautionary measure by the conquerors, on account of the rumours circulating that under the sole of the horse's hoof lay the image of a Latin pierced through with a nail.¹⁵⁰ Although Niketas clearly contradicts himself in the explanation for the destruction of the statue, this should not be taken to indicate that he did not carefully consider the reuse of this passage. Instead, it seems that Niketas did carefully select the information he used from LO, but never planned to incorporate the final section into his main text. The *De Statuis* largely lamented the destruction of the statues in Constantinople by the 'barbarian conquerors'. As we shall see later on, this did not fit well with Niketas' argument in version a, which is precisely why he overlooked it.

It is also important to note that unlike the previous versions, the titles in version a do not provide us with the official positions that the author held in government. This could be taken to mean that the author no longer held any official positions and/or that he desired to separate himself and his work from any association with the regime. Indeed version a appears to have been a personal endeavour of the author and not a history written 'upon request'. The authorial purpose can only be revealed through a comparison of version b vis-à-vis a. More important than the analysis of individual alterations and additions is the observation of a general trend, which distinguishes the earlier version from the later one. This trend is foremost apparent in a tendency towards criticism and moralizing that ultimately results in a frightening indictment against Byzantium's entire military and civil establishment. This attitude is then extended to include virtually all the inhabitants of the empire, who are unfavourably compared with foreigners, hence the more favourable treatment of the Latins in certain passages of the a-text.¹⁵¹ The author's intrusion into the narrative is most evident in this version, as Niketas assumes the role of a grave chastiser of his contemporaries' evils; denouncing and censuring his compatriots,

¹⁴⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 649/58-78.

¹⁵⁰ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. 643/11-644/40.

¹⁵¹ See especially 614/10 onwards where version b breaks off.

whether emperors, churchmen or laymen, in an emotionally charged and ultimately personal evaluation of an entire era of Byzantine history.

Viewed from this perspective it becomes evident that the author's purpose in revising the text was to provide an explanation for the catastrophic events of 1204. As is evident in the final embittered section of his history (614/10ff.), Niketas was deeply disappointed by the political developments after the fall of Constantinople. He condemns the 'Romans' of the East for their indifference to the sufferings of the 'Romans' in the West, for their tendency to divide into factions instead of uniting to offer resistance to the conquerors, and for their foolish fixation on electing emperors.¹⁵² The Greek rulers of the East in the early days after the Latin conquest, i.e. Manuel Mavrozomes, Theodore Laskaris and David Komnenos are likened to *Polyarchia*, 'a three-headed monster constituted of the foolish'.¹⁵³ The Greeks in the West fared no better: 'they invested themselves with evil tyrannies, and while they should have opposed the Latins, they surprisingly made peace with them and fought against each other.'¹⁵⁴

The historian's disillusionment at these conditions should be taken as the primary motivating factor for the final revision. His despair is personal, rather than stereotypical, and magnified by the tragedy of his own situation. As we have seen, Niketas had abandoned the original version of his history with the hope of a better life in Nicaea. But this hope never materialised. In version a, the author bewails the loss of his splendid office and his abundant wealth in Constantinople,¹⁵⁵ and laments his fate as an unwanted refugee who is deprived of the means of livelihood and forced to reside 'as if captive' in overcrowded churches and wooden houses on the shore of Lake Askania.¹⁵⁶ Yet, amidst these appalling conditions, the now older and wiser Niketas appears to have discovered the ultimate means of self-expression; an expression, which was denied to him when he was composing his original history under the constraints imposed by his role as a civil

¹⁵² Nik.Chon., p. 625/28-46.

¹⁵³ Nik.Chon., p. 625/44-46: καὶ ἦν πολυαρχία πάλιν τὸ γεγονός ἐπινεμομένη τὴν ἔω καὶ θηρίον τρικάρηνον ὑπὸ τῶν ἀβελτέρων διαπλεχθέν.

¹⁵⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 637/37-40: οἱ δὲ...κακοδαίμονας τυραννίδας περιεβάλλοντο, καὶ δέον φιλεχθρεῖν Λατίνοις, οἱ δ' ἀντωφθάλμουν ἀλλήλοις καὶ Λατίνοις, τὸ καινόν, ἐσπένδοντο.

¹⁵⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 645/65ff: καὶ δέον τοῖς ἡμῶν αὐτῶν κακοῖς ἀρμόζεσθαι πρὸς συμπάθειαν, οὐ πόλιν, οὐχ ἐστίαν, οὐ προορισμὸν τῶν πρὸς τὸ ζῆν ἐχόντων, οὓς ἥδεσαν πάλαι περιωνύμους πλούτου βαθυτήτι καὶ δυναστεία λαμπρότητι.

¹⁵⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 645/80-83: ἐξ ὅτου τὴν παρ' Ἀσκανία λίμνη τῆς Βιθυνῶν ἐπαρχίας προεδρεύουσιν Νίκαιαν παροικεῖν εἰλόμεθα ὡς αἰχμάλωτοι, καὶ παρὰ τοῖς αὐτοῖς συνιόντες τεμένεσιν ἀσυναφεῖς τᾶλλα καθέωράμεθα. Also *Panoplia Dogmatike* (ed. van Dieten), p. 57/16-19.

servant and dependent of the emperor. In the final years of the historian's life, these restrictions appear to have been lifted due to his withdrawal from active political life. Perhaps this is why in the title his name is no longer accompanied by the full array of his illustrious offices in government, but only by the simple κῦρ.

Version a was most likely written between ca. 1215-17, in the final years of the Niketas' life. He must have composed it while still residing as a 'captive' alongside Lake Askania, either in an overcrowded church or in a wooden house, impoverished and betrayed. Freedom of expression and emotional torment form a powerful combination; one that produced what has justifiably been described as a *monumentum aere perennius*,¹⁵⁷ the final draft of the *Historia*.

¹⁵⁷ van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 55.

CHAPTER II

PATTERNS, MOTIFS, AND PURPOSES IN NIKETAS' EDITORIAL PROCESS

The grand historical compilation of Niketas Choniates is the product of a lengthy process of composition, which even at first glance, shows careful planning and preparation as well as a characteristic assiduousness in the actual writing process. This is immediately apparent in the traits that have for so long distinguished Niketas from other historians – excellent manipulation of language, richness and rarity of vocabulary, the unconventional use of imagery, and a unique and highly potent descriptive quality.¹ Moreover, the process of successive revision affords us with the unique opportunity to observe the various stages of composition virtually from the initial drafts penned at the desk of Niketas to the final product that reached his readers roughly two decades later.

The manuscript tradition of the *Historia* bears witness to a massive and elaborate 'editorial' procedure that spanned decades and was influenced, if not defined by the circumstances and purpose of the author at each distinctive phase of composition. A comparative analysis of the different versions of the text reveals a laborious and thorough process of revision, which encompassed both the style and the substance of the narration. Through a detailed examination of these revisions a clear-cut pattern emerges, which assists us in identifying the historian's purpose in writing the final and now definitive version of the *Historia*.

With regard to the style of the composition, it is immediately apparent that Niketas was concerned equally about the quality of the narrative as he was about its substance. This is not surprising when we consider that Byzantine historiography, much like its ancient antecedent, was supposed to achieve a combination and reconciliation of the two principal qualities of accuracy and style.² Although a study

¹ For the aforementioned traits in Niketas see F. Grabler, 'Das Zitat als Stilkunstmittel bei Niketas Choniates', *Akten des XI. internationalen Byzantinistenkongresses* (Munich 1958), II, Munich 1960, pp. 190-93; Idem, 'Niketas Choniates als Redner', *JÖBG* 11-13 (1962-64), pp. 7-78; A. P. Kazhdan & S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the eleventh and twelfth Centuries*, Cambridge 1984, pp. 256-83; Maisano, 'Letteratura e storiografia nell' opera di Niceta Coniata'.

² See comments of Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The CapturDThe of Thessaloniki*, p. 3. Discussions in: R. Jenkins, 'The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Literature', *DOP* 17 (1963), pp. 39-52; G. Moravcsik, 'Klassizismus im byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung', *Polychronion Festschrift für Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1966, pp. 366-77; H. Hunger, 'On Imitation (μίμησις) of Antiquity in Byzantine Literature', *DOP* 23-24 (1969-70), pp. 15-38; A. Vasilikopoulou-Ioannidou,

of the language and literary style of Niketas remains a *desideratum* of modern scholarship, it has been already demonstrated that our historian was in full control of the classicizing linguistic register, which he used in a flexible and often original way.³

The morphology, syntax and vocabulary selections of the author are well illustrated in van Dieten's 'Index Graecitatis'. Niketas' vocabulary is enormous, and includes rare and precious words as well as many neologisms. Van Dieten marks 404 words in the index to his edition as ἀθησαύριστα (i.e. words used only by Niketas or by him for the first time). These include many new nouns (θεμίστευμα, κατατρόπωσης, κατεδάφισις, λίχνευσις, ὁμογνιότης, παραλογότης, τημελούχησις, χειραγωγήσις) verbs (ἀμφοριτροχάζω, γριφολογέω, διατεχνάομαι, καθυποφέρω, περισυστέλλω, σκηνορραφέω) and adjectives (ἀειπαγής, δαιμονόληπτος, ἔμπυρευτής μητρόλεθρος, μονοδιάστατος, ὀργιλώδης) formed by composition from classical models and a number of poetic or dialectic forms. Niketas also greatly exploits synonyms. For example, the words λέμβοι, ἀλιάδες, ἀκάτια used for boats, where Niketas resorts to vocabulary of Hellenistic origin for the purposes of variety, or στρατός, στρατιά, στράτευμα, where again we see variety displayed in the different forms of the same word.⁴

Although Niketas certainly cultivates the language used by his classical models, he does not strictly follow the syntactic patterns of Attic prose,⁵ meaning mostly contracted forms of nouns and verbs, Attic declension, the indefinite pronoun, the accumulation of negations, the middle voice, the optative, the pleonastic use of

Η Αναγέννησις των γραμμάτων κατά τον ΙΒ' αιώνα εις το Βυζάντιον και ο Όμηρος, Athens 1971, pp. 73-90; R. Browning, 'The Language of Byzantine Literature', in S. Vryonis (ed.), *The Past in Medieval and Modern Greek Literature*, Malibu 1978, pp. 117 ff; *ODB* 2, p. 938: Alexander Kazhdan refers to the purposes of 'delight' and 'entertainment' in Byzantine historiography as served by anecdotes, jokes, sensational stories, miracles, love affairs and murder scenes.

³ Grabler, 'Das Zitat als Stillkunstmittel', pp. 190-93; Idem, 'Niketas Choniates als Redner', pp. 63-65; Maisano, 'Letteratura e storiografia', pp. 47-48; Idem, 'Rinnovamento della tradizione storiografica bizantina nel XII secolo', *Storia e tradizione culturale a Bizanzio fra XI e XII secolo*, Naples 1993, pp. 119-34; A. Kazhdan & A. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1985, p. 225: 'The stylistic innovations that evolved from the eleventh all the way through the twelfth centuries culminated in the ambitious chronicle of Nicetas Choniates.'

⁴ See discussion in Maisano, 'Letteratura e storiografia', p. 53 and Idem, 'Varianti d'autore', p. 73.

⁵ Grabler, 'Niketas Choniates als Redner', pp. 63-64: 'Er [Niketas] ist weniger "Attizist" als die Attizisten der ersten nachchristlichen Jahrhunderte. Sein Griechisch empfindet er durchaus als etwas Lebendiges, der alten Sprache Gleichwertiges, sein Wortschatz ist nicht angelesen, wenn sich auch Glanzlichter seltener Wörter zahlreich finden, sondern er ist die natürliche, freilich von fremden Einflüssen und volkssprachlichen Elementen freigehaltene Weiterentwicklung der Sprache der Septuaginta und der römischen Kaiserzeit, mit sehr zahlreichen nur bei ihm belegbaren Neubildungen, und gegenüber der Antike eigenem Gepräge...Niketas bewahrt zwar den alten Formenreichtum, hält sich aber keineswegs streng an die Regeln der alten Grammatiker.'

participles, the use of abstracts instead of concretes, etc.⁶ For example, he uses the optative to obtain variety, especially side by side with the indicative in principal and subordinate clauses, and with the future indicative in a potential sense. He likes periphrastic verb forms and often uses ἄν as an adornment.⁷ Frequently, but not always, Niketas will substitute the double σσ with the double ττ, συν with ξυν, γίνομαι with γίγνομαι. Proverbs and loci similes abound: ἀετοῦ γῆρας, ἐκὼν ἀέκοντὶ γε θυμῷ, ἐλαφῶν δειλότερος, χιόνος λευκότερος, λήθης βυθῷ παραδιδόναι, πόρρω Διός τε καὶ κεραυνοῦ, and so on.⁸ The sheer number of citations from biblical and ancient sources, which significantly are not usually copied *verbatim* by our author, is astounding: 482 for the Old Testament, 220 for the New Testament, 245 for Homer, 30 for Lucian, 21 for Euripides, 15 for Plutarch, 11 for Herodotus, 9 for Plato and Aristophanes, 8 for Sophocles, and so on.⁹

Apart from these immediately noticeable stylistic features, a careful reading of the *Historia* reveals Niketas' meticulous attention to detail and his continual and often anxious striving to enhance the literary efficiency of his work as evidenced by the successive revision of words, phrases, sentences and entire passages. Indeed, our author's artistic talent lies in his selection of language on the basis of the tone he wishes to set for a particular incident he is narrating or an individual he is describing. For example, it is characteristic of Niketas to utilise the language of Homer to depict beauty, but to abate his zeal for antiquity in episodes where God is given a prominent role.¹⁰ When the historian discusses the ambition of John II Komnenos to 'liberate' Jerusalem, he packs the narrative with scriptural language to enhance the religious

⁶ See discussion in Hunger, 'Imitation', pp. 30-31.

⁷ Browning, 'The Language of Byzantine Literature', p. 121.

⁸ van Dieten, 'Index Graecitatis': *Historia*, II, pp. 107-110; See in general: D. Karathanasis, *Sprichwörter und sprichwörtliche Redensarten des Altertums in den rhetorischen Schriften des Michael Psellos, des Eustathios und des Michael Choniates sowie in anderen rhetorischen Quellen des XII. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1936.

⁹ As listed in van Dieten's 'Index Locorum', *Historia*, II, pp. 127-43. The list is further supplemented by the studies of G. Fatouros, 'Textkritisches zum Geschichtswerk des Niketas Choniates', *JÖB* 26 (1977), pp. 119-27; Idem, 'Die Autoren der zweiten Sophistik im Geschichtswerk des Niketas Choniates mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Eunapios und Philostratos', *JÖB* 29 (1980), pp. 165-86; D. Christides, 'Αναμνήσεις από αρχαία κείμενα στο έργο του Νικήτα Χωνιάτη «Χρονική Διήγησις»', *Επιστημονική Έπετηρίς Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 22 (1984), 689-709; Idem, 'Ο Κώος ποιητής του Νικήτα Χωνιάτη', *Ελληνικά* 35 (1984), pp. 70-73; A. Pontani, 'Nebenterminologie, Topoi, Loci Similes und Quellen in einigen Stellen der *Chronike diegesis* von Niketas Choniates', in *Novum Millenium: Studies on Byzantine History and Culture dedicated to Paul Speck*, C. Sode & S. Takacs (eds.), Aldershot 2001, pp. 271-78; Idem, 'Niceta Coniata e Licofrone', *BZ* 93 (2000), pp. 157-61.

¹⁰ Vasilokopoulou-Ioannidou, *Αναγέννησις*, p. 87.

tone of the emperor's endeavour.¹¹ However, when depicting the character of Andronikos I Komnenos, he works out a σύγκρυσις (comparison) between the Homeric Odysseus and the emperor, which is affected through the continual use of Homeric adjectives traditionally associated with Odysseus.¹² As one scholar has acutely remarked 'Niketas' language is on occasion reminiscent of a chorus in an ancient tragedy, at other times the lamentations of Jeremiah, or the prose historical writing of Thucydides and Xenophon.'¹³ Given the care with which our author composed his narration, it is only to be expected that his revisions would involve many alterations and corrections on the level of style.

The stylistic revision of the text involves traditional 'editorial' processes concerned mostly with the quality and presentation of the composition. Stylistic variation is one of the cardinal principles of these types of revisions, as can be seen clearly by the sheer number of alterations made to the text that fall into this category. These mostly concern changes in grammatical structure, simple variation of word order, variation of lexical items and a characteristic attempt on the part of the author to refine his prose. On the other hand, a significant number of revisions seem to have been carried out for the purposes of clarification and precision. This again can be seen at the simplest level, in changes in sentence structure (including the simplification of many sentences and the omission of superfluous words) and in the correction of errors. Considering the plethora of variations, both Jan Louis van Dieten and Riccardo Maisano have pointed to interference by later hands and the possible corruption of the original Niketastext. We shall come back to this point later.

Niketas' alterations can also be viewed as unconventional in the sense that they clearly display a trend towards explicitness, which replaces the vagueness with which the author often speaks of certain persons or events in version b. This is often accompanied by variation and modification of meaning and is observed throughout the process of revision. As we shall see, this trend is undoubtedly connected to a more general tendency towards criticism that distinguishes version a from version b. On the level of style, criticism inevitably involved the use of harsher language and the desire to present material with a greater impressionistic force.

¹¹ Maisano, 'Letteratura e storiografia', pp. 47-48.

¹² A. Vasilikopoulou, 'Ἀνδρόνικος ὁ Κομνηνὸς καὶ Ὀδυσσεύς', *ΕΕΒΣ* 37 (1969-70), pp. 251-59; R. Maisano, 'I poemi Omerici nell'opera storica di Niceta Coniata', in *Posthomerica II- Tradizioni omeriche dall'Antichità al Rinascimento*, (eds.), F. Montanari & S. Pittaluga, Genoa 2000, pp. 49-50.

¹³ Vasilikopoulou-Ioannidou, *Αναγέννησις*, p. 87.

Concerning the substance of the narration, a number of important features distinguish the two main versions of the text. As already mentioned, version a is considerably longer, more comprehensive, more critical and more detailed. Not only does it cover about one and a half years more (April 1205-November 1206) than version b, but it also offers significant additional information concerning certain events and a more comprehensive presentation and explanation of these.¹⁴ At the same time, version a offers in-depth character portraits of a substantial number of individuals missing in b, who are in the overwhelming majority of cases either emperors or prominent government officials. Yet there also exist many factual discrepancies between the two versions. On numerous occasions the interpretation of events and the assessment of personalities differ considerably. Moreover, the critical and emotionally charged voice of Niketas pervades the narrative in its entirety with a series of personal interventions, which may be viewed as authorial commentaries essentially designed to provide the narration of events with a didactic purpose, and ultimately explain the disaster of 1204.

Niketas' purpose in conducting these revisions is primarily discernible in the vast array of alterations and in the addition of supplementary information relating to the portrayal and discussion of leading individuals. This is not surprising when we consider that Niketas claimed affiliation with the Homeric-Herodotean historiographical tradition with regard to subject matter, i.e. the deeds of men 'κλέα ἀνδρῶν'. He was, moreover, consciously working within a tradition of historiography where man predominates over the events and where the narration revolves in a periphery around the protagonist/s of the story.¹⁵ The framework of the *Historia* is essentially a narrative of episodes focusing on the deeds and lives of the leading men of the age, often very detailed and highly circumstantial. The emphasis of the author can be explained by his strong conviction, clearly articulated in the preface of the work, that history was the proper place for praise and retributive justice for leading

¹⁴ The revision of the text is recorded in Appendix II. The discussion in this chapter will focus on the most important changes and additions made by Niketas.

¹⁵ For this trend in Byzantine historiography see: P. Alexander, 'Secular Biography in Byzantium', *Speculum* 15 (1940), pp. 194-209; R. Jenkins, 'The Classical Background of the Scriptores post Theophanem', *DOP* 8 (1954), pp. 11-30; A. Garzya, 'Topik und Tendenz in der byzantinischen Literatur', *Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 113 (1976), pp. 301-19; J. N. Ljubarskij, 'Man in Byzantine Historiography from John Malalas to Michael Psellos', *DOP* 46 (1992), pp. 177-86.

individuals.¹⁶ According to Niketas, the value of history is to proclaim loudly ‘whether the actions of a man during his lifetime were holy and righteous or lawless and contemptible.’¹⁷ Seen from within this context, it is clear that whether the historian provides us with supplementary information concerning issues of domestic or foreign policy, the machinations of political rivals at court, rebellions and separatist movements within Byzantium, murders and illicit sexual affairs, it is always inextricably connected to the central characters of the historical drama and only incorporated so as to highlight their actions and personality.

It is equally unsurprising to find that the individuals singled out by the author are either emperors or prominent government officials, and in almost all cases, men. These were the protagonists of political events unfolding almost always in Constantinople (prior to 1204) in Niketas’ conventionally centred presentation of history. Yet there is a peculiar twist in Niketas’ selection of individuals. A significant number of persons discussed were related to the extended Komneno/Angelos family, either through direct descent or marriage, or if not, were favourites at the Komnenian court during the time span of Niketas’ own administrative career. Upon closer examination this is perhaps to be expected when we consider that this kinship group dominated Byzantine society. Although the male line of the Komnenian emperors died out at the end of the twelfth century, descendants of the family continued to rule Byzantium until its final collapse in 1461.¹⁸

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries no less than six scions of the Komnenoi were elevated to the throne of Byzantium. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the family still held a pre-eminent status within the aristocracy itself (ἄρχοντες Κομνηνοί), and their power and influence was maintained by their dominance in society and their solidarity as a family – a family which confined all outsiders to a ‘second-class’ aristocracy of state and ecclesiastical officials.¹⁹ At

¹⁶ This trend was already apparent in the historiography of imperial Rome and epitomized in the *Anecdota* of Procopius of Caesarea: See C.W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1983, pp. 118-120. The preface of Niketas has much in common with that of Diodorus of Sicily (ca. 90-20 B.C.), who stressed the utility of history as a guide for human behavior and the significant role of praise and invective. See H. Lieberlich, *Studien zu den Proömien in der griechischen und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung*, II, Munich 1899, pp. 28-30.

¹⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 2/14-15: ὁρθῶς γὰρ ἡ τοῦναντίον φαύλως βεβιωκότες εὖ τε καὶ ὡς αἰσχρῶς ἀκούουσι.

¹⁸ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 180.

¹⁹ See in depth discussion in Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 180-201; R. Macrides, ‘What’s in the name “Megas Komnenos”?’ *A/I* 35 (1979), pp. 238-45, and Idem, ‘From the Komnenoi to the

around the same time it appears that the name Komnenos became ‘a symbol of power and authority.’²⁰

Immunity from criticism and protection of family honour was an inherent feature of Komnenian rule, and included the entire extended family – relatives by blood as well as by affiliation. Those who benefited from Komnenian rule were expected to uphold Komnenian supremacy and enhance their omnipotent image. This is precisely what Niketas, a prominent member of the Komnenian court, does in his *encomia* as well as in the original version of his historical work.²¹ This supposition can be extended to include Niketas’ attitude towards prominent government officials and in general persons of power and influence. As Niketas protected the reputation of the imperial family, so he protected the reputation of prominent men still alive and in some cases at the height of their power at the time of the original composition.

Version a was, in striking contrast, the product of an older Niketas, who was at that time an impoverished and embittered refugee, excluded from an active role in the political affairs of the Empire of Nicaea and writing in the aftermath of 1204. Political freedom and professional independence allowed Niketas to reveal what he had hitherto concealed and to underline the mistakes in policy and faults in character of the leading men of the age. His purpose was to integrate these criticisms in his explanation for the fall of the empire, in which according to Niketas, the Komnenoi played a prominent part. With characteristic self-assurance, he states the following in the a-text: ‘If there is one greatest cause why the empire fell to her knees, suffered the conquest of her territories and towns, and later herself utterly perished, it was those descended from the Komnenoi who arose and aspired to imperial power.’²² From the context of the passage, which appears immediately following the rebellion of Michael Komnenos Doukas (1200), it is clear that Niketas is referring to the series of successful coups and the multitude of unsuccessful uprisings carried out by members

Palaiologoi: Imperial models in decline and exile’, in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines. The rhythm of imperial renewal in Byzantium*, Aldershot 1994, pp. 269-82.

²⁰ Macrides, ‘Megas Komnenos’, p. 243.

²¹ However, Niketas’ tactful disapproval of the ruling dynasty is apparent from the very beginning of his narration. In a fictitious speech attributed to Alexios I Komnenos, the historian portrays the emperor in effect admitting to the unlawful manner in which he gained the throne: p. 6/19-20: τὴν βασιλείαν οὐκ ἐπαινετῶς εἰληφώς, ἀλλ’ αἵμασιν ὁμογενῶν καὶ μεθόδεις Χριστιανῶν ἀφισταμέναις θεσμῶν. See also F. Tinnefeld, *Kategorien der Kaiserkritik der byzantinischen Historiographie von Prokop bis Niketas Choniates*, Munich 1971, p. 159.

²² Nik.Chon., p. 529/25-28: εἴ τι οὖν αἰτιώτατον τοῦ τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν ἐς γόνυ καταπεσεῖν καὶ χωρῶν καὶ πόλεων χειρώσεις παθεῖν, ὅστατα δὲ καὶ αὐτὴν ἐξαπολωλέναι, τοῦτο οἱ ἐκ Κομνηνῶν γεγόνασιν ἀφιστάμενοι καὶ βασιλειῶντες.

of the extended Komnenos/Angelos family primarily in the later part of the twelfth century.²³ Yet this assessment largely determined Niketas' entire work of revision as is evident from his critical stance towards *all* the Komnenoi who appear in the pages of his history.

The author conducted these revisions in the late years of the second decade of the thirteenth century, and most of the instances he cites occurred from between twenty to forty years before this time (i.e. 1180-1204). Although the nature of the information added in the a-text varies considerably in form, content and quality, it is largely based on Niketas' own impressions and judgments and intimately connected to the purpose of his undertaking in this final phase of the composition. In all, Niketas supplies additional information in the a-text (Appendix I) for well over sixty individuals. The overwhelming majority of these individuals belonged to the imperial court circle, i.e. they were either emperors or relatives of emperors, military, civil, or ecclesiastical officials of the state, and were active in the period after 1180.

Of course, it is the central characters of the story, the Byzantine emperors, who receive the greatest attention, and more specifically, Manuel I Komnenos, Andronikos I Komnenos, Isaakios II and Alexios III Angelos. Concerning prominent government officials, Niketas' additions and alterations appear largely in the second half of the text (post 1180) and include well-known bureaucratic families of the late twelfth century such as the Kamateroi, the Kastamonitai and the Mesopotamitai. In our investigation we shall look specifically at Niketas' presentation of the powerful family of the Kamateroi and examine the author's attitude to a number of individual officials, who played an important role in the affairs of the state.

Finally, the most significant category of revisions are due to Niketas' personal intervention in the a-text, which takes the form of an authorial commentary on the historical action. It is characterised by continuous foreboding, lamentations, personal outbursts at regular intervals and a tendency to moralise. These types of interventions are primarily found in the second half of the text (post 1180) and usually placed immediately following the narration of certain events or the discussion of leading individuals, their political actions and/or personal lives. In these cases, the demoralizing influence of 1204, as well as the historian's continual attempts to argue cause and effect to explain the calamity, is clearly apparent.

²³ That Niketas means to include the extended Komnenos/Angelos family is evident in the periphrastic version of his history, which states: οἱ Κομνηνοὶ ἠ' Ἀγγελοὶ.

We shall commence our discussion with an analysis of Niketas' stylistic alterations and then proceed to examine the historian's more substantial alterations and additions with regard to his portrayal of individual emperors and prominent government officials. A discussion on Niketas' argumentation and historical causation as they specifically related to the events of 1204 shall be reserved for a separate section, for although the historian's arguments appear almost exclusively in version a of the text, they merit a separate investigation, which must take into account other factors not related to the revision of the text. As we examine the alterations and additions of our author we must always bear in mind his purpose, which was to argue the reasons for the fall of Byzantium in 1204. All his revisions were conducted with that aim, and the reader of the revised a-text anticipates the impending disaster and goes away with the impression of a corrupt and decadent society that easily fell prey to foreign aggression. The protagonists of the events were clearly to blame. In Niketas' own words: 'The apathy and inactivity of those who administered the affairs of the Romans brought in the pirates [the Fourth Crusade] to act as our judges and chastisers.'²⁴

²⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 586/67-69: ἡ γὰρ ὑπτιότης καὶ οἰκουρότης τῶν τὰ Ῥωμαίων χειριζόντων πράγματα δικαστὰς ἡμῶν καὶ κολαστὰς τοὺς ληστὰς ἐπεισήνεγκεν. See discussion in J. Harris, 'Looking back on 1204: Nicetas Choniates in Nicaea', *Mésogeios* 12 (2001), pp. 117-24.

PART ONE: STYLISTIC ALTERATION

Before we proceed with our examination of the stylistic alterations made to the a-text, the question of possible interference and corruption should be addressed. In his discussion of manuscript V, van Dieten notes that two lengthy additions and a number of smaller ones made to the a-text are to be found only in this manuscript. As these amendments are of the general character of the revisions made to a-text, the editor concludes that they stemmed from the pen of Niketas himself. However, concerning V van Dieten also observes an inclination towards a shortening and simplification of sentences, which according to the editor does not correspond with Niketas' usual style. He further points out that on certain occasions, this tendency is responsible for a number of errors, which could hardly have been made by the erudite Niketas.²⁵ For example: 26/87 πλαδῶντι διακένω τε καὶ γήϊνω καὶ σομφώδει προβλήματι: Pb πλαδῶντι καὶ διακένω γήϊνω προβλήματι: V; 80/7 ταύτης ἀντίθετος μοῖρα ἐνδιαβάλλουσι τὸν ἄνδρα: APWb ταύτης ἀνδρός, ἐνδιαβάλλουσι τοῦτον: V; 102/94 οὐχ ἀπλοῦν τὴν γνώμην ἀλλὰ κρυψίνουν καὶ ὕφαλον: APWb οὐχ ἀπλοῦν τὴν γνώμην: V; 336/23-24 περὶ τοῦ κενοῦ δοξαρίου τρέχοντες: APWb περὶ τῆς οἰκείας δόξης τρέχοντες: V; 344/60 εἶναι ἀπαγγελλόμενος: APWb γενόμενος: V; 373/64 Βλάχων: APWb Βουλγάρων: V.

Concerning APW, van Dieten notes a characteristic attempt at clarification, evidenced mostly by the repetition of a person or thing already mentioned a few lines earlier and certain additions and expansions aimed at explanation. In cases where the clarification and/or explanation are unnecessary, the editor assumes that the alterations were not made by Niketas himself. For example: 83/87 τούτοις before ἐπηκολούθησαν; 159/13 ὁ Νεεμὰν after τοῦτον; 358/72' Ἀλέξιος ὁ Βρανᾶς after στρατηγός; 378/61 αὐτοκράτωρ after στρατεύματος; 428/42 Ἰσαάκιος after διέθετο for purposes of clarification, or 112/53-55 αὐτὸν [Manuel] μὲν ἐφίστησι παραπετάσματι, τὸν δὲ Στυππειώτην...ἄγει ὅπου ἦν ὁ βασιλεὺς: Vb αὐτὸν [Manuel] μὲν ἐφίστησι παραπετάσματι, τὸν δὲ Στυππειώτην...ἄγει ὅπου ἦν ἀθέατος ὁ βασιλεὺς: APW; 235/8-10 οὐκ ἐς αὐτὸ δὲ μόνον ἔδρων ταῦτα τὸ Μίλιον, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν τῆς λαμπρᾶς ἵπποδρομίας σφενδόνην

²⁵ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LXXIII-LXXIV.

παραγενόμενοι καὶ ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὰ ἀνάκτορα [τὰ οὕτως ἀπρεπῇ διεπράττοντο add. APW]: Vb; 324/91 ἐκτρεπόμενοι φυγάδες ὅλω ποδὶ τῆς πατρίδος γεγόνασιν [καὶ τοῖς ἐκ γειτόνων Ῥωμαίοις παρενέβαλον ἔθνεσιν add APW]: bV to provide explanation.²⁶

More recently, Riccardo Maisano has posed the question of multiple authorship of the *Historia* in order to explain the multitude of variant readings in the surviving manuscripts of the Niketastext, as well as the reason why there are so many manuscripts in the first place. He concludes that the text, in its final version (=V) was transformed and indeed evolved not only in the hands of the author himself, but also in those of its first readers, its ‘addresses.’ These were the friends to whom Niketas presumably sent the text throughout its various stages of composition with the explicit purpose of actively intervening in its style and lexical selection. They were culturally and educationally speaking of a similar background to Niketas, and the whole process is described as a ‘literary exercise’.²⁷

The manuscript tradition of the *Historia*, chronologically so close to the time when the original was composed, allows us to glimpse at the creative process from Niketas’ own desk to that of his first readers in the primary stages of distribution.²⁸ Although Maisano admits that there is an insurmountable difficulty in identifying when the interference of the author ceases and that of his readers begins, he considers the ‘interventions’ to have been made for the purposes of supplying information unknown to the author, arriving at greater precision, or even to be the products of a word-exercise, a sort of game played by the cultural elite, especially when considering the myriad variations concerning individual insignificant words.²⁹

It is true that the manuscript tradition of the *Historia* clearly demonstrates corrections, alterations and contaminations, which are not accidental and have not crept in during the process of transmission, which in any case allows for variations in order to deal with difficulties such as corrupt passages. The dubious group of corrupt manuscripts (AW and often P) clearly manifests interference by later hands, and it is not coincidental that in reconstructing the main text, van Dieten has given preference to the verified readings between b and V, and P and V. When we consider that PW

²⁶ For more examples see: 4/64, 230/93, 237/66, 238/80, 240/37, 245/83, 246/7, 250/20, 254/9, 14, 19, 256/42, 312/14-22, 313/31-34, 334/82; 335/20-21; 357/60.

²⁷ Maisano, ‘Varianti d’ autore’, pp. 74, 78-79.

²⁸ Maisano, ‘Varianti d’ autore’, pp. 65-66.

²⁹ Maisano, ‘Varianti d’ autore’, p. 66.

and occasionally A take an intermediary position between b and V, offering in some cases a ‘transition’ or ‘compromise’ between the two main versions,³⁰ interference by later hands becomes the most likely scenario to explain the variant readings. However, in an effort to defend the authorship of all the versions by Niketas, van Dieten pointed to the fact that the readings of APW can be confirmed by comparison with those of our author’s other major work, the *Panoplia Dogmatike*,³¹ thus limiting the interference by later hands at the level of style (and more specifically on attempts at simplification, clarification and explanation). However, even this supposition is difficult to sustain when we consider that these specific kinds of alterations manifest a clear pattern throughout the text, which, as we shall see, is evident in all the manuscripts of the revision (=VAPW).

Moreover, it is significant that the alterations made to the *Historia*, even in cases of *lectiones singulares*, (as Maisano admits)³² take into account all the elements of the narration (historiographical, ideological, political and personal), and thus are more likely to have been made by the same author.³³ As a result, even if we support the view that Niketas’ text had been ‘tampered with’, the interference of later hands can only be detected (and in most cases with a fair degree of uncertainty) in style and lexicon, and not in the substance of the narration. Finally, it is significant to point out that the revision of the *Historia*, although multifunctional in many respects, clearly manifests very specific patterns, motifs and purposes, which no one except for Niketas Choniates could possibly have envisaged and brought to fruition. In this section we shall look closely at these, beginning with alterations conducted on the level of style. For the purposes of our discussion, these are grouped in the following categories: 1) stylistic variation; 2) clarification/precision; 3) variation/modification of meaning.

Stylistic Variation

1) Grammatical structure

35/27 ἀναστείλας: PAb ἀναστέλλων: V

³⁰ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. LXXVI.

³¹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LXXVI, XIX, XCI.

³² Maisano, ‘Varianti d’ autore’, p. 74.

³³ See remarks of G. Contini, *Breviario di ecdotica*, Turin 1990², p. 8.

The grammatical change appears in V to provide the particular verb with a sense of duration and a tone of an endeavour.³⁴

60/46 νέφος πολεμίων: APb νέφος πολέμιον: V

Here Niketas changes his phrase *a cloud of enemies* to an *inimical cloud* in the final revision for the purposes of stylistic congruency.

110/6-7 οἶον ἀγαθὸν ἢ προμήθεια, τὴν δ' ὑστεροβουλίαν: APWb

οἶον ἀγαθὸν ἢ προμήθεια, ἢ δ' ὑστεροβουλία: V

The syntax is altered to provide grammatical coherence between the first and second part of the sentence.

246/26 καὶ προχύσεως αἱμάτων: b καὶ προχύσεως αἵματος: VAPW

The change from plural to singular of the word *blood* restores the rhythmical clause.

247/31-32 κράτιστον μέρος καὶ μαχιμώτατον: APWb

κράτιστον καὶ μάχιμον μέρος: V

The superlative degree of the adjective is altered to a positive to correspond with κράτιστον.

275/7 ὑπὸ δυοῖν τυράννων: APWb ὑπὸ δυοῖν τυράννοι: V

The grammatical congruency occurs once again in the final revision of V.

282/88 καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως ἀλλοτρίων...πρᾶξιν: APWb

καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως ἀλλοτρίαν...πρᾶξιν: V

Again the change in the grammatical form of the word restores the rhythmical clause in V.

417/58 τῶν Ἰσμαηλιτῶν κατεχόμενον: b ὑπὸ Ἰσμαηλιτῶν κατεχόμενον: VAPW

The preposition replaces the article in accordance with classical grammatical rules.

538/59 συνθήκας: bLO ξυνθήκας: VAP

³⁴ Maisano, 'Letteratura e storiografia', p. 52, especially n. 1. For more examples see: 340/39 κατετυράννευσε: PWAb κατετυρράννησε: V; 547/85 ἐβασίλευε: PLO ἐβασίλευσε: VAb; 598/95 διεπεπράχει: bL διεπράξατο: VP; 608/55 ἐπωνόμαστο: b ἐπωνομάζετο: VP.

Niketas here chooses the ‘attic’ form of the word, commonly found in classizing authors such as Procopius, Agathias, Leo the Deacon, Michael Psellos, and others.

2) Simple variation of word order

175/40 αἰὲς προμηθευτικὸς καὶ βουλευτικὸς: Pb προμηθευτικὸς αἰὲς καὶ βουλευτικὸς: VAW; 185/45 τὰ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν φρονήματα: b τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν τὰ φρονήματα: VAPW; 208/30 ἀρετῆς ἐπίδειξιν: b ἐπίδειξιν ἀρεϊκῆς ἀρετῆς: AP^{pc}W ἐπίδειξιν ἀρετῆς: V; 222/79 μετακομίσας ἐκεῖθεν: Pb ἐκεῖθεν μετακομίσας: VAW; 262/91 κάλλιστον δεξίωμα τύχης ἡγησάμενος: b δεξίωμα τύχης κάλλιστον ἡγησάμενος: VAP; 320/72 τὰ τεῖχη τῆς πόλεως: bW^a τὰ τῆς πόλεως τεῖχη: VAP; 359/3 ἀμφοτέρα συνήλθοσαν: Pb συνήλθοσαν ἀμφοτέρα: VAW 361/78 ἀμαρτήματα ἡμῶν: APWb ἡμῶν ἀμαρτήματα: V; 370/90 ἐξιόντων πόλεμον: APWb πόλεμον ἐξιόντων: V; 413/50 τῶν δυσχωριῶν περιχαρῶς: Pb περιχαρῶς τῶν δυσχωριῶν: VAW; 523/41 συνασπισμὸς ἀσυλλόγιστος: b ἀσυλλόγιστος συνασπισμὸς: VAP; 523/56-57 τὸ τῆς ὥρας ἀκαρές: b τῆς ὥρας τὸ ἀκαρές: VAP; 523/58-59 γνώσεως ἄντικρυς: b ἄντικρυς γνώσεως: VAP; 538/84 μῖσος ἄσπονδον : bLO ἄσπονδον μῖσος: VAP; 609/81 πολλῶν ἡλισμένην: b ἡλισμένην πολλῶν: VP

3) Variation of lexical items

192/40 ἐπῶν ἀποτεμόμενος καὶ εἰπὼν: b ἐπῶν ἀποτεμόμενος καὶ αἰνέσας: VAPW; 247/50 τοῦ πρεσβευτοῦ...τὴν πρεσβείαν: APWb τοῦ πρεσβευτοῦ...τὴν ὑπερεσίαν: V; 558/48 τῶν ἀγοραίων οἱ φιλονότεροι...ἐν τῇ Κωνσταντινείῳ ἀγορᾷ: b τῶν ἀγοραίων οἱ φιλονότεροι...ἐν τῷ Κωνσταντινείῳ φόρῳ: VAPLO; 605/75 ὥς ἀπόμαχον θροήσει τὸ ἔνδον ἀπομαχόμενον: b ὥς ἀπόλεμον θροήσει τὸ ἔνδον ἀπομαχόμενον: VPLO. Avoidance of repetition is one of principal conventions of graceful composition. The diligence with which the author revised the text in order to increase the variety of his vocabulary is evident in the careful selection of synonyms.

131/90 μεθοδεία συνερίθω κέχρηται ὁ πολύφρων: PWb

δολοφροσύνη κέχρηται ὁ πολύφρων: VA

Niketas is here describing a ruse devised by Andronikos I Komnenos to escape capture. A lexical search reveals that the author replaced the scriptural μεθοδεία συνερίθω (*Eph.* 4, 14; 6, 11) with the Homeric expression δολοφροσύνη (*Il.* XIX. 97. 112) so as to correspond with πολύφρων (*Od.* XIV. 424). Niketas' selection of vocabulary was in this instance dictated by his desire to portray Andronikos I Komnenos in the manner of the Homeric hero.³⁵

207/90 τῷ ἐρυθρῷ τῆς βασιλείου βαφῆς: b

τῷ ἐρυθρῷ τῆς βαφῆς: APW

τῷ ἐρυθρῷ τῆς γραφῆς: V

With this reference to the imperial signature, we can witness the author's different choices, resulting again in the final *red writting* – more suitable than *red colour*.

285/57 Ἀνδρονίκου ἀπέχθειαν: b Ἀνδρονίκου ἐμβρίθειαν: A Ἀνδρονίκου ἀπήνειαν: VWP^{ir}

Here is a selection of Niketas' words to describe the ruthless disposition of Andronikos I Komnenos. We can see the historian alternating among ἀπέχθεια (hatred), ἐμβρίθεια (severity) to reach the most precise definition of Andronikos' temperament in the Homeric ἀπήνεια (inhumanity/cruelty).³⁶

314/40 τό τῆς γνώμης ὁποῖον: b τό τῆς γνώμης ἀνήμερον: P τό τῆς γνώμης ἄστατον: VAW

The reference, once again describing the disposition of Andronikos Komnenos, is altered three times: *the quality of disposition* – *the savageness of disposition* – *the unstableness of disposition*. Niketas is trying to explain Andronikos' behaviour towards two of his chief ministers, whom the emperor had originally elevated to the highest positions and regarded as his dearest friends, but later executed on mere suspicion. We can see that in this context the author's final revision is best suited for the purpose of the phrase.

³⁵ Maisano, 'Varianti d' autore', p. 72.

³⁶ Niketas uses this word on a number of occasions (291/38, 312/1, 314/54, 323/80, 353/15). With the exception of 314/54, where he refers to Andronikos' trusted counsellor, Constantine Tripsychos, at all other times the author uses ἀπήνεια exclusively to describe Andronikos: Kazhdan, *Concordance*, 16, R907.

315/74 τὸ ἀχανὲς ἐκεῖνο τῆς ὀργιλότητος πέλαγος: b

τὸ αἰμωπὸν ἐκεῖνο τῆς ὀργιλότητος πέλαγος: VAPW

Niketas is using the metaphor of the *vast sea* of irascibility to depict Andronikos I Komnenos. The phrase τὸ ἀχανὲς πέλαγος is common in Byzantine literature (it is used on several occasions by Michael Psellos, Anna Komnene and Michael Choniates). Niketas, in an effort to enhance Andronikos' image as a savage murderer and to use the rarest possible adjective, alters the phrase to *bloodstained sea of irascibility*.

317/16 πεδιλορράφους: APWb τὰ τῶν ποδῶν καττύοντες πέδιλα: V

The neologism πεδιλορράφος (shoe stitcher) used to describe the Latins was taken over from Eustathios (*The Capture of Thessaloniki*, 82/18: πεδίλων ῥαφέας). It is explained in V (those who stitch shoes).³⁷

337/57 ἀπεριθαμβήτως φθέγγεσθαι: Pb ἀπεριβομβήτως φθέγγεσθαι: VA

The more common ἀπεριθαμβήτως (without fear) is replaced by the *hapax* ἀπεριβομβήτως (literary without going around, i.e. speaking in a direct manner).³⁸

363/26 τὸν βασιλέα ἐχλεύαζεν: b τὸν βασιλέα ὠνείδιζεν: AW τὸν βασιλέα κατωνείδιζεν: P τῷ βασιλεῖ κατωνείδισε: V

After his defeat by the Byzantines in 1185, William II (King of Sicily) sent a letter *mocking the emperor* Isaakios II Angelos for the cruelty with which the latter had treated the Sicilian captives of war. *Mock* is subsequently altered to the more suitable *reproach* in variant grammatical structures.

370/91 κατώρθωσαν: PWA^{mg} b ἴσχυσαν ἐκτελέσαι: V

The banal term κατώρθωσαν is replaced by the scriptural phrase ἴσχυσαν ἐκτελέσαι (Luke, 14.29, 14.30).

373/71 τὸ τυπικὸν παραβλέψατο: APWb τὸ τυπικὸν ἀπεσκοράκισε: V

The passage refers to Leo Monasteriotes' belief that the Vlach revolt (beginning in the autumn of 1185) occurred because Isaakios II had disregarded the provisions of

³⁷ Pontani, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, II, p. 657, n. 7.

³⁸ Pontani, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, II, p. 674, n. 97.

the *typikon* of Basil II (976-1025) for the monastery of Sosthenion. In the original version, Niketas tells us that Isaakios II Angelos *overlooked* Basil's provisions. In V *overlook* is replaced with the stronger *rejects with contempt*. This is simply a part of an overall trend towards the use of harsher language to accompany the more severe criticism found in a.³⁹

To further illustrate the range and extent of lexical revision, we provide the following list of examples randomly chosen from the text: 60/43 εὐρύνας διεξόδους: b διευρύνας ἐξόδους: VAP; 63/35 διερεθιζόμενον: b ἐξαπτόμενον: AP ἐξαπτόμενον: V; 106/92 τὴν εἴσοδον καὶ τὴν ἔξοδον: APWb τὴν κάθοδον καὶ τὴν ἀνοδον: V; 186/80 ἡγεῖτο τῶν τελευταίων τάξεων: b ὠπισθοφυλάκει: VAPW; 207/90 ἐζώωσεν: Pb ἀνέρρωσεν: VAW; 208/12 μοναχικὴν: Pb μοναδικὴν: VAW; 237/69 εἰκονίζουσιν: bPA^{mg} ἀπεικάζουσιν: VW; 238/82 ὑφορώμενοι: b ὑποπτεύοντες: VAPW; 240/53-54 τῶν ἐν ἀμφινοίαις: b ἐν ἀμφιδόξων: AW τῶν διαφορῶν: V; 301/13 συλλογίζεται: Pb μεθιστᾶ: VAW; 397/4 βοὴν ἐκπληκτικωτάτην: Pb βοὴν καταπληκτικωτάτην: VAW; 398/22 ἐπετίθεντο λαθραίως: b ἐπετίθεντο λεληθότως: PWa 398/25 ἐκδρομῶν: b ἐπελεύσεων: VAP 400/93-94 ἀνόητος: W ἄνομος: P ἄνογος: A ἀνόσιος: V; 401/25 ἐφέποιτο: b συνεφέποιτο: APW συνέποιτο: V; 406/44 σχηματίζεται: Pb ὑπεκρίνεται: AW ὑπεκρίνετο: V; 407/82 οὐκ ἐπαινετόν: APWb παμμισές: VD^{mgyp}; 494/10 συμφωνίαν: Wb ἀρμονίαν: VAP; 512/80 ἀγωνισάμενοι: b ἀμιλλησάμενοι: VAPW; 537/43 κρυπτόμενος: bLO συναναστρεφόμενος: VAP; 595/15 εἰσφοράς: bLO ἀποφοράς: VP

4) Literary enhancement

243/41 τῷ σεσοφισμένῳ φρονήματι ἐξομιλῶν τοὺς...πάντας: PWb
 δολιόφρονι ἐξοκείλας τοὺς...πάντας : V

As Andronikos Komnenos was preparing to enter Constantinople (beginning of 1182), he went around the provinces in an attempt to muster support for his cause.

³⁹ For more examples see the above cited 363/26 and also 269/93-94 καὶ διεχεῖτο τὸ τῇ ψυχῇς ἡδόμενον: b καὶ διεχεῖτο τὴν αἰμοβόρον ψυχὴν: VAPW; 323/69 οὐ ξυνειλήφει: b οὐκ ἐκρεωβόρησε: VAPW; 369/74 τυραννεύοντος: b κατατυραννεύοντος: VAPW; 407/82 καὶ φίλαυτον οὐκ ἐπαινετόν: PWb καὶ φίλαυτον παμμισές: VA; 511/60: ὁ θαδίας: b ὁ βέβηλος εὐνοῦχος: VAPW (and other examples hereafter throughout).

The more banal expression *he won over everyone with his shrewd spirit* is replaced by *fraudulent ways*.⁴⁰

283/23-24 ἀμέλει μηδὲ φέρειν ἔχων τὸ τῶν ἔνδον αὐθαδές: b

λιμώπτων ὡς κύων, Δαυιτικῶς εἰπεῖν, ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ἔχειν τὸν καταθωπηθισόμενον: VAP^{mg}

When Andronikos I Komnenos besieged the rebellious city of Nicaea in 1183, the resistance put up by its inhabitants enraged him.⁴¹ Niketas replaces his original sentence – [Andronikos] *could not bear the stubbornness of those within* – with a reference to Psalm 58.15 *in the words of David [Andronikos] was hungering like a dog which has nothing to feed on*, perhaps in an effort to intensify his brutal, if not almost beastlike depiction of Andronikos.

295/48 μὴ ἀηδῶς τὸν λόγον δεξάμενος: b

τῇ τῶν χειλέων περιψοφήσει τὸν παθινάμενον ὑποκρινάμενος: APW

ὡς ὁ Πιλάτος ἐπὶ τοῦ θεανθρώπου Χριστοῦ: V

Following a series of public executions certain men asked Andronikos I for permission to take down the bodies of the deceased men. In relating Andronikos' reply, Niketas resorts to his typical irony and sarcasm⁴² so as to illustrate the hypocrisy of the emperor, who pretended to be grieved over the executions. In the historian's final selection, Andronikos, *like Pilate with reference to Christ*, asked if they had been dead for a while. This phrase is lifted from Mark, 15.44 and corresponds with Andronikos' question (Matthew, 21.41). The biblical language is used to enhance the irony through metaphor rather than simply hinting or outright stating Andronikos' pretence, as in APWb.

338/89-92 εἰ μὴ τοιάδε θεὸς ἠκύρωσε διαβούλια, ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τὸν ἄνδρα θέμενος: Wb

εἰ μὴ κατὰ τὸν προφήτην εἰπεῖν τὴν οἰκείαν μάχαιραν ἐπέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ τὸν ἀποστάτην δράκοντα, τὸν σκολιόν: VAP

⁴⁰ Pontani, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, II, p. 579, n. 143.

⁴¹ For these events see Nik.Chon., pp. 269-70; Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 54-56; Michael Choniates, I, pp. 219-20; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 52-53; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, p. 115.

⁴² For these traits in Niketas see: Kazhdan, *Introduction to Narrazione cronologica*, I, pp. LI-LV.

The imperial decree drawn up by Andronikos I Komnenos and his advisors shortly before the emperor's downfall in September 1185 effectively sentenced to death all those suspected of plotting against the throne.⁴³ Niketas commences by telling us that each individual named would have been put to death: *had not God annulled these designs, removing the man from the world of the living*. In the revision of the passage, Niketas does not alter the meaning of his statement, but intensifies its intended effect through the use biblical allusions and more fervent language: *had not God in accordance with the words of the prophet brought down his own sword on the apostate dragon, the crooked servant* (Esaias, 27. 1).

463/80-82 ὅς ἐγκρατὴς τῆς Κύπρου γενόμενος: b

οὗτος ἐγκρατὴς ἅμα καὶ ὀλετὴρ τῆς τῶν Κυπρίων νήσου
γενόμενος: VAPW

Niketas is here referring to the separatist movement of Isaakios Komnenos in Cyprus.⁴⁴ His original phrase: '[Isaakios] who became master of Cyprus' is altered to the more potent '[Isaakios] who became master and destroyer of the island of the Cypriots.'

510/50 ὥς δ' οὐ πολλῷ ὕστερον ἀντάρτης ὁ Ἀλέξιος γέγονε: b

ὥς δ' οὐ πολλῷ ὕστερον εἰς ἔργον τὸ δέος ἐκβέβηκεν: VAPW

Alexios Ivanko, the Vlach grandson-in-law of Alexios III, rebelled in 1199/1200.⁴⁵ We can bear witness to Niketas' stylistic revision: *not long after Alexios became a rebel – not long after what was feared became reality*. The banal and simplistic ἀντάρτης γέγονε is replaced by a more abstract and 'high' style remark.

584/25-27 οἱ μὲν ἀρχοντες ἐν ῥαθυμίᾳ ἐτράφησαν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὰ δεῖπνα
πρωϊότερον προσιέμενοι: b

⁴³ See F. Cognasso, 'Partiti politici e lotte dinastiche in Bizanzio alla morte di Manuele Comneno', *Memorie della Reale Accademia delle scienze di Torino*, Ser. 2, 62/2 (1912), pp. 310-11; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, p. 69.

⁴⁴ For this individual see Th. Vlachos, 'Ο τύραννος τῆς Κύπρου Ἰσαάκιος Κομνηνός (1184-1191)', *Buζ* 6 (1974), pp. 169-77. For his separatist movement: Nik.Chon., pp. 291-92; J. Hoffmann, *Rudimente von Territorialstaaten im byzantinischen Reich (1071-1210). Untersuchungen über Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen und ihr Verhältnis zu Kaiser und Reich*, Munich 1974, p. 32-38; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 116-17.

⁴⁵ For these events see Nik.Chon., pp. 509-13; Idem, *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 59-64; Hoffmann, *Territorialstaaten*, pp. 51-55; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 130-31; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 132-33.

οἱ μὲν βασιλεῖς ἐν ῥαθυμία τραφέντες ἦσαν ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ
 ῥέγκοντες ἡδύτερον Ἐνδυμίωνος καὶ τὰ δεῖπνα πρωϊαίτερον
 προσιέμενοι: VAPW

In order to place greater emphasis on the indolence of the rulers of Byzantium, Niketas expands on his original phrase with an allusion to mythology: *they snored more sweetly than Endymion*.

Clarification/Precision

98/83-84 τῷ ῥηγί: Wb τῷ ῥηγί τῶν Ἀλαμανῶν: VAP; 189/52 προσάγει δῶρον: Pb προσάγει δῶρον ἐκ τοῦ σουλτάν: VAW; 250/25 τοῦ δήμου ἀναθαρρήσαντος: b τοῦ δήμου τῆς πόλεως ἀναθαρρήσαντος: VAPW; 336/27 παρασύρων τὸ δοκοῦν ὑπεύθυνον: Wb παρασύρων τὸ δοκοῦν Ἀνδρονίκῳ ὑπεύθυνον: AP; 498/11 ἐπιλογαὶ τοίνυν καὶ ψηφοὶ: b ἐπιλογαὶ τοίνυν καὶ ψηφηφορίαι τῶν ἀρξόντων: VAP. A characteristic attempt at clarification can be observed, in its simplest form, consisting of the addition of an individual or a thing that has been previously mentioned in the narrative, but is repeated so as not to confuse the reader.

461/14 ἐς τὴν ἕω διαπεραιοῦται...: b ἀλλ' οὕπω μῆνες τρεῖς περιππεύκεισαν...: VAPW; 462/65-66 δυσὶ τὴν ἐκστρατείαν περιγράψας: VAPW om. b; 493/64-65 ἐν τούτοις μὲν οὖν...ἐνιαυτὸς ἐξίκετο τρίτος ἄρχοντι Ῥωμαίων Ἀλέξιῳ τῷ Κομνηνῷ: VAPW om. b; 499/59-60 κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἐτήσιον μνήμην Γεωργίου τοῦ χριστομάρτυρος: VAPW om. b; 514/36-37 ἕαρος ὑπολήγοντος ἔξεισι καὶ ἄπεισιν εἰς τὰ Κύψελλα: VAP om. b; 553/91-92 τῆς ἕκτης ἰνδικτιῶνος: VA om. bLO. It is interesting to observe the more precise use of dates in the revised version and especially towards the end of the work.⁴⁶

4/67 τοῦ ἐκ Κομνηνῶν ἄρξαντος πρώτως Ἀλεξίου: PHb

τοῦ ἐκ Κομνηνῶν Ἀλεξίου: VA

In version b Niketas states that Alexios was the first of the Komnenian emperors, clearly alluding to the Komnenoi of his own times. In a, however, he must have

⁴⁶ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCV.

realised the ambiguity of his statement, which did not take into account the reign of Isaakios I Komnenos (1057-59).⁴⁷

53/59 θρόνων τῶν ἀρχικῶν: b πάνυ λαμπρῶν: VAP

Niketas is referring to the ancestry of Bertha of Sulzbach, first wife of Manuel Komnenos.⁴⁸ We can see that in version b the author erroneously states that Bertha came from a regal family (she was the sister-in-law of the German emperor Conrad III). His source on this occasion could well have been Kinnamos (κόρην ἐς ῥῆγας)⁴⁹ or encomia. Niketas corrects his mistake in version a by stating that Bertha came from a *most illustrious family*.⁵⁰

95/29 ἐπεὶ δὲ σχεδὸν ἅπασι δοκεῖ τοῖς μέγα δυναμένοις πάλαι καὶ
σήμερον: b; ἐπεὶ δὲ φασι πολλοὶ: AW; ἐπεὶ δὲ τισι δοκεῖ τῶν πάλαι
καὶ σήμερον: A^{mg} PW^{mg}; δοξάζων δ' ὁ Μανουήλ οὐκ ἐπαινετῶς: V

This passage is concerned with the widespread belief in astrology and its detrimental consequences on Byzantium.⁵¹ In this particular case, Niketas illustrates how Manuel I Komnenos' reliance on astrology caused him to make the wrong strategic decision. In the older version of the text we are only given vague references to Manuel's belief in astrology. Indeed, explicitness in the historian's prose is only found in V, which reveals that it was, in fact, Emperor Manuel who held this belief.⁵²

104/35 ὁ μὲν ἀδελφοῦ θυγατρὶ συνουσίαζεν: PWb

ὁ μὲν ἀδελφῆς θυγατρὶ συνουσίαζεν: VA

⁴⁷ Maisano, 'Varianti d'autore', p. 67.

⁴⁸ For Bertha of Sulzbach see: P. Lamma, *Comneni e Staufer. Ricerche sui rapporti fra Bizanzio e l'Occidente nel secolo XII*, I, Rome 1955-57, pp. 33-39; Varzos, I, pp. 454-59; *ODB* 1, p. 284.

⁴⁹ Kinnamos, p. 36/2

⁵⁰ R. Maisano, 'Tipologia delle fonti di Niceta Coniata (libri I-VIII)', in *Storia poesia e pensiero nel mondo antico. Studi in onore di Marcello Gigante*, Naples 1994, p. 401. It is, admittedly, impossible for us to tell whether Niketas or someone else made the correction.

⁵¹ Manuel's belief in astrology will be discussed further on. In general see: *ODB* 1, pp. 214-16; U. Riedinger, *Die Heilige Schrift im Kampf der griechischen Kirche gegen die Astrologie*, Innsbruck 1956; H.-G. Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, Rome 1937, pp. 65-84.

⁵² For another example of this kind: 399/48-49 οἶον τοὺς ἐς ἡμᾶς αὐτοκράτορας...ῥιψασπίδας γινομένους: APWb οἶον τὸν Ἰσαάκιον...ῥιψάσπιδα γινόμενον: V. But also the opposite, where explicitness is found in b: 452/3-4 εἰ δὲ κατὰ νέμεσιν ἐκεῖσε ταῦτην ἔτισε [Ἰσαάκιος] τὴν δίκην ὡς δράσας κακῶς Ἀνδρόνικον: b εἰ δὲ κατὰ θείαν νέμεσιν ἐκεῖσε ταῦτην τὴν δίκην ἔτισεν [Ἰσαάκιος]: VAPW. This last example is, however, a very rare case as explicitness is almost exclusively found in VAPW.

This reference concerning the parentage of Theodora Komnene, mistress of Manuel I, has caused great confusion among scholars, as some have accepted that Theodora was the daughter of one of Manuel's brothers, and others, of one of his sisters. Varzos has shown that Theodora could not have been the daughter of one of Manuel's three brothers, Alexios, Andronikos and Isaakios, and thus proposed a correction of Niketas' passage.⁵³ The testimony of VA, however, although excluded from van Dieten's main text, here confirms that Niketas had corrected the mistake himself.⁵⁴

537/54-55 πλέον δὲ εἰς ἀλυσιτελῇ τῷ κοινῷ παντάπασιν ἀναλώματα: bLO
 πλέον δ' ἀπεπλούτουν πρὸς ἑταιρίδας καὶ συγγενεῖς ἀλυσιτελεῖς
 παντάπασι τῷ κοινῷ: VAP

Niketas tells us in versions bLO that the emperors Isaakios II and Alexios III wasted the public revenues on useless expenses. Only in VAP are we told precisely that these went towards the enrichment of courtesans and relatives.

584/25 ἄρχοντες: b βασιλεῖς: VP

The abstract *archons* (meaning those who rule)⁵⁵ which is later changed to *emperors* is found in a highly critical passage, where the historian is placing condemnation on the Byzantine people for allowing Constantinople to fall into Latin hands. He begins by reproaching the indolence of the rulers. It is, of course, obvious who the 'rulers' are in version b, but the explicitness of Niketas in a, makes it unmistakably clear that it was primarily those who held the imperial throne in succession that brought about the downfall of the state.

Variation/modification of meaning

72/84 καὶ οἰκουρία τῶν τὰ Ῥωμαίων πρό πολλοῦ διεπόντων πράγματα: APWb
 καὶ οἰκουρία τῶν τὰ Ῥωμαίων διεπόντων πράγματα: V

In the opening of book II of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, Niketas bitterly complains about the loss of Byzantine territories in Asia Minor. As we can see in the older versions, the historian blames this state of affairs on the *inactivity of those who*

⁵³ Varzos, II, pp. 417-18, n. 3.

⁵⁴ Again as with example 53/59, it is impossible for us to tell whether it was Niketas or someone else who corrected the error.

⁵⁵ For Niketas' use of ἀρχω and its derivatives see Kazhdan, *Concordance*, 13, R737.

ruled the Romans long ago, alluding perhaps to the devastating losses that the empire suffered in the second half of the eleventh century. In V he alters the phrase to the *inactivity of those who rule the Romans*, thus transferring the blame to the rulers of his own time.

234/83 οἱ τῆς Κωνσταντίνου δημόται: b

τὸ τῆς Κωνσταντίνου ἀγοραῖον σύστημα: AW

οἱ τῆς Κωνσταντίνου ξύγκλυδες ὄχλοι: A^{ms} P

οἱ τῆς Κωνσταντίνου οἰκήτορες: V

This phrase, result of a successive revision, is found in a critical passage concerning the people of Constantinople. In version b Niketas' condemnation focuses on the *citizens* of the city, then becomes more specific (ἀγοραῖον), which can also be seen in an earlier phrase τό τῆς Κωνσταντίνου ἀγοραῖον φιλοταραχώτατον (234/71-72 APW), but chooses to encompass all those who live in the city in the final revision. Either because of a lack of precise knowledge or because of general trend of denunciation that embraces everyone in the final revision, the author rather vaguely states *the inhabitants of Constantinople*.

209/51-52 ὑπὸ τῶν ἀλλοφύλων σκυλευόμεναι: APWb ὑπὸ τῶν ἀλλήλων σκυλευόμεναι: V

In discussing the disorder prevalent throughout the Byzantine provinces, Niketas initially focuses on the continual incursions and plundering of Byzantine territories by *foreign peoples*, but then alters this to from *one another*, perhaps alluding to the rebellious movements within the empire in an effort to highlight their destructive consequences.

225/47 καὶ οὕτω μὲν τὰ κατὰ τὴν βασίλειον αὐλὴν πάσης ὄντα συγχύσεως: b καὶ οὕτω μὲν τὰ κατὰ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτὴν πάσης ὄντα συγχύσεως: VAPW.

In this passage Niketas is referring to the troubled situation of the empire after the death of Manuel I Komnenos. In version b, *affairs in the palace* were in a state of turmoil because of the extraordinary power wielded by Alexios Komnenos, the

protosebastos and *protovestiarios*.⁵⁶ In version a Niketas tells us that *affairs of the state* were in turmoil during the reign of Alexios II. Although this alteration can be also be attributed to the similarity between the two phrases (i.e. a simple mistake of a copyist), it fits well with the overall trend towards criticism displayed in the later versions and is present in all the manuscripts of the revision (=VAPW).

229/67 ὁ δὲ πρωτοσεβαστὸς Ἀλέξιος, τῷ ἰδίῳ φυσιοῦμενος...: b ὁ δὲ πρωτοσεβαστὸς Ἀλέξιος ἐκπάγλως ἐμαίνετο, τῷ ἰδίῳ πίσυνος: VA

In this instance Niketas enhances his malicious portrait of Alexios Komnenos the *protosebastos* and *protovestiarios*, and in effect ruler of the empire during the minority of Alexios II (1180-82), with the addition of the Homeric phrase concerning the destruction wrought on the Greek camp by Hector: μαίνεται ἐκπάγλως, πίσυνος Διί (Il. 9.238).

249/87 ὡς πολὺς τὸ γένος καὶ τὴν τύχην ὑπέραυχος: APWb

καὶ θρασὺς καὶ αὐθάδης καὶ λίαν ὑπέραυχος: V

The aforementioned Alexios was, according to Niketas in version b, *from an illustrious family and boasted of good fortune*. This statement is then replaced by the radically different – *he was insolent, wilful and exceedingly boastful*. As we shall see clearly in the following section, this type of alteration is an integral part of Niketas' more critical attitude towards the Komnenoi in version a.

263/23 ἐξ ὁμόρων ἐθνῶν: Pb ἐκ γειτόνων ἐθνῶν: A ἐκ γειτόνων ἐχθρῶν: V

Niketas is referring to the Turkish nations bordering with Byzantium in Asia Minor. It is interesting to note that *neighbouring nations* is replaced by *neighbouring enemies* in the final revision, perhaps reflecting the political conditions of the early decades of the thirteenth century. Again, although this could simply be a mistake of transmission, it corresponds well to Niketas' critical revisions and transformed stance in light of later developments.

292/64 ἀρχῆς: b τυραννίδος: VAPW; 314/43 ἐκείνου ὑπηρετήσεσι: b τῆς τυραννίδος καθυπουργήσεσι: VAPW

⁵⁶ For Alexios see Varzos, II, no.132 pp. 189-218 (this individual will be discussed in detail later on).

Both these references concern the rule of Andronikos I Komnenos.⁵⁷ The use of the word tyrant is rare in the first half of Niketas' text and preponderant during the discussion of the reign of Andronikos I Komnenos.⁵⁸ These alterations point to Niketas' more critical attitude towards Andronikos in the final version.

297/9 μαλακίαν τοῦ Δαυίδ: b ἀνανδρίαν τοῦ Δαυίδ: P ἀστρατήγητον τοῦ Δαυίδ: AW προδοσίαν τοῦ Δαυίδ: V

In narrating the capture of Thessaloniki by the Normans (1185), Niketas places the bulk of the blame on the *strategos* David Komnenos.⁵⁹ His explanation for David's behaviour is altered mildly between b and PWA, focusing more or less on David's inability to defend the city, but takes a radical shift towards betrayal in the final revision. It is rather significant that Eustathios, who was Niketas' source on this occasion, uses the word προδότης to refer to David.⁶⁰

369/83 ναὶ μὴν οὐδ' αἴσιος ἐκρίνετο οἰωνός: PWb καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀπαίσιος ἐκρίνετο οἰωνός: V

When the blind Alexios Komnenos (nephew of Theodora Komnene and second cousin to the Angeloi emperors) was appointed naval commander (1186), many deemed this an inauspicious omen. We can see that Niketas utilises harsher language in V.

404/94-1 ταῦτα δὲ γράφων ἦν ἐν τῷ δοξάζειν παρ' ἑαυτῷ τινῶν ὑφηγήσεσι φωνούντων μᾶλλον ἀπὸ γαστρὸς ἢ περ προειδόντων τὰ μέλλοντα: Pb οὐκ οἶδα τίνων εἰσηγουμένων ἐπισφαλῶς μέντοι καὶ τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσιν οὐχ ἀρμοδίως: W ταῦτα δὲ γράφων ἦν ἐν τῷ δοξάζειν παρ' ἑαυτῷ καθάπερ ἀπὸ τρίποδος τοῦ τότε πατριάρχου Δοσιθέου: VA Isaakios II Angelos is persuaded that the

⁵⁷ Andronikos I Komnenos is the only emperor deprived of the title of *basileus* by Niketas. The historian accords him the imperial title only fourteen times, indicating that Andronikos was openly regarded as a usurper. See discussion in A. Kazhdan, 'Certain traits of Imperial propaganda in the Byzantine Empire from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries', *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Age, Islam, Byzance, Occident*, Paris 1983, pp. 22-23. Andronikos I Komnenos is omitted from the lists of the *Synodikon* of Orthodoxy: J. Gouillard, 'Le Synodikon de l'Orthodoxie', *TM* 2 (1967), p. 96.

⁵⁸ Kazhdan, *Concordance*, 13, R745. For Niketas' use of the word tyrant see also Hoffmann, *Territorialstaaten*, pp. 57, 96.

⁵⁹ For this individual see: K. Varzos, 'Ένας δούξ Θεσσαλονίκης μή συνταυτισμένος μέχρι τώρα. Ο Δαβίδ Κομνηνός και οι Θεσσαλονικιώτες κατά την πολιορκία της Θεσσαλονίκης από τους Νορμανδούς', *Μακεδονικά* 20 (1980), pp. 30-47.

⁶⁰ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 74ff.

German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa plans to attack Constantinople (1189). In the Pb Niketas does not divulge the name of the individual/s who advised the emperor on this matter; in W, the author claims he does not have knowledge of who these individual were. In VA, however, we learn that it was the patriarch Dositheos, and once again we can see that Niketas becomes more forthright as the process of revision progresses.

437/21 τῶν κοινῶν διοικήσεως: Pb τῆς βασιλείας: D^{mg}VA; 437/22 τὴν τούτων διεξαγωγὴν: PWb τὴν πάντων διεξαγωγὴν: VA

Niketas is discussing the role of Theodore Kastamonites (*logothetes ton sekreton*) in the administration of Isaakios II Angelos. The historian tells us that Isaakios transferred the *management of civil affairs* to Kastamonites, which is then replaced by *the emperorship*. The emperor further relinquished to Kastamonites the direction of *these affairs* – subsequently altered to *all affairs*. While the passages found in the older versions seem to imply that Kastamonites simply became head of the civil service, those of the revision suggest something entirely different, and namely that Kastamonites effectively replaced the emperor.

458/40 καὶ προσπαθεῖν αὐτὸν ὑπ’ ἄλλοφύλων κακῶς: b

καὶ προσπαθεῖν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἐναντίων κακῶς: VAPW

When the crown of Alexios III Angelos fell to the ground and shattered after his coronation ceremony in 1195, many deemed it an inauspicious omen. Some claimed that the emperor would be ill-treated by *foreigners*. Niketas slightly alters the prognostication by replacing *foreigners* with *enemies*.

475/26-27 ἄλλ’ οὕπω καιρὸς συχνὸς παρελήλυθε: b ἄλλ’ οὕπω ἡ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ τὴν ἄλμην ταύτην ἀπέπτυσεν ἀνένευσέ τε καθαρῶς καὶ ἀνέπνευσε: VAPW

Niketas has just completed his narration of the war of Alexios III Angelos with the Turks and the peace treaty signed in 1196. Before moving on to his next subject (tribute demanded by the German Emperor Henry VI), Niketas adds a preliminary note – *but not a long time had passed* – in version b – *but before the Roman empire*

had spat out this brine and lifted its head so as to breathe freely. The difference in attitude to past events as seen before and after 1204 is clearly visible.

537/51-53 μάλιστα δὲ μὴ ξυνέχοντες τὰ συλλεγόμενα χρήματα ἐξέφερον...: bLO; μάλιστα δὲ φιλοχρηματίαν νοσοῦντες οὐτ' ἀπὸ δικαίων πόρων πλουτεῖν ἠνείχοντο, οὔτε ξυνεῖχον τὰ συλλεγόμενα, ἀλλ' ἐξέφερον...: VAP

In bLO Niketas states that Isaakios II and Alexios III could not hold on to the wealth they amassed. In VAP we are informed about the illegitimate sources from which the wealth was collected in the first place. This is another example of the explicitness that characterises Niketas in version a.

From our analysis it is evident that the stylistic revision of the text was of great significance to our author. Indeed, Niketas paid attention to issues of grammatical structure, variation of lexical items and particularly the literary enhancement of the narrative. His attempts to arrive at clarification and precision are mostly evident in the repetition of the subject, the correction of errors and the more exact identification of references to individuals. There is also a significant degree of variation and modification of meaning, with an unmistakable tendency towards the application of greater criticism accompanied by the use of harsher language and highlighted by the insertion of appropriate scriptural and/or ancient citation. Finally, there are clear indications of the author's transformed attitude towards past events after 1204. It is to these later tendencies and their development in the narrative that we shall now turn to.

PART TWO: THE EMPEROR OF THE ROMANS

The main characters of the *Historia* are the Byzantine emperors. Niketas' narrative in essence presents a historical and often moral assessment of their actions and personalities. In the twelfth century we are already far removed from the 'annalistic' event-focused way of writing history. From the age of Theophanes Continuatus onwards most Byzantine historians conformed to the principles of *Kaisergeschichte*, where the narration concentrates on the actions and character of the main hero (or anti-hero), the emperor.⁶¹ The overwhelming emphasis on the figure of the emperor reflects his dominance in the Byzantine world and is entrenched in both the political philosophy and the historiography of the Byzantine state.⁶² It must also be noted that Byzantine historians of this era generally depict characters that possess a mixture of traits, which venture beyond conventional eulogy and invective prevalent in the description of character in earlier periods.⁶³ Especially in the historiographical productions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, positive as well as negative aspects of character were presented in an attempt to structure an overall image, which was then related to the development of historical events.⁶⁴

The uniqueness and fascination of Niketas' technique of delineating characters, especially those of the Byzantine emperors, has not escaped scholarly notice. Most recently Alexander Kazhdan claimed that the innovations in character portrayal of the eleventh and twelfth centuries culminated in the work of Niketas

⁶¹ Ljubarskij, 'Man in Byzantine Historiography', p. 18; Idem, 'Homme, destinée, providence: Les avatars des notions antiques dans la philosophie byzantine l'histoire', *La Philosophie Grecque et sa portée culturelle et historique*, ed. A. Garzya, Moscow 1985, pp. 229-68.

⁶² For political philosophy see; F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, II, Washington 1966; E. Barker, *Social and Political thought in Byzantium*, Oxford 1957; H. Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin*, Paris 1975; I. Karayannopoulos, *Η Πολιτική Θεωρία των Βυζαντινών*, Thessaloniki 1992. For historiography see the concepts of *Kaiserbiographie* and *Kaiserporträt* in E. Gerland, 'Die Grundlagen der byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung', *Byz* 8 (1933), pp. 97-98; Alexander, 'Secular Biography', pp. 194-209; Jenkins, 'Scriptores post Theophanem', pp. 13-30; R. Scott, 'The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Historiography', *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, ed. M. Mullett & R. Scott, Birmingham 1981, pp. 71-72; also Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, pp. 180-93; J. Harris, 'Distortion, divine providence and genre in Nicetas Choniates's account of the collapse of Byzantium 1180-1204', *JMH* 26 (2000), pp. 24-25.

⁶³ See comments of Ljubarskij, 'Man in Byzantine Historiography', p. 17. For a general discussion on the representation of character see: R. Bossard, *Über die Entwicklung der Personendarstellung in der mittelalterlichen Geschichtsschreibung*, Zurich 1944; W. Ginsberg, *The Cast of Character. The Representation of Personality in Ancient and Medieval Literature*, Toronto 1983.

⁶⁴ Ljubarskij, 'Man in Byzantine Historiography', p. 186; Harris, 'Distortion', p. 25; also more general comments in A. P. Kazhdan, 'Der Mensch in der byzantinischen Literaturgeschichte', *JÖB* 28 (1979), pp. 1-21; A. P. Kazhdan & G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies*, Washington DC, 1982.

Choniates, whose principal heroes, endowed with internal contradictions appear three-dimensional and indeed, larger than life.⁶⁵ More specifically, however, Niketas' criticism of the figure of the emperor, i.e. his *Kaiserkritik*, has received well-deserved attention. Hans-Georg Beck was the first to draw attention to the fact that Niketas criticises the very attributes of imperial omniscience that imperial panegyric traditionally celebrated.⁶⁶ He further argued that during the reign of Manuel I Komnenos the discontent of government officials with the emperor's absolutist policy was expressed ideologically through Niketas, who went as far as to claim that this group possessed attributes that entitled them to rule.⁶⁷

Franz Tinnefeld went a step further when he voiced the conviction that Niketas applied basic criticism to the idea of imperial power, and thus with him traditional *Kaiserkritik*, hitherto applied on an individual basis, appears to broaden into *Systemkritik*. The reason put forth was a perceptible anti-absolutist sentiment in the writings of Niketas and the tendency to limit the supreme position of the emperor in favour of the aristocracy.⁶⁸ Finally, Paul Magdalino connected Niketas' aversion to imperial absolutism to a general tendency prevailing among the intellectuals of the twelfth century that looked beyond the Eusebian doctrine of the Christlike monarch to more classical notions of the 'public' nature of the state and the 'conditional' character of imperial power.⁶⁹

Niketas' criticism of the emperor is undoubtedly founded on the traditional principles of the *Kaiseridee*, as expounded by earlier authors, such as Synesios of Cyrene and inextricably interwoven with the idea that the welfare of an autocratic state depends on the competence of its omnipotent emperor.⁷⁰ In his own words: 'from the beginning, whatever happens depends on him; if he is evil affairs will be

⁶⁵ Kazhdan & Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, pp. 225-26.

⁶⁶ H.-G. Beck, 'Res Publica Romana: Vom Staatsdenken der Byzantiner', *Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, philosophisch-historische Klasse Munich 1970, II, p. 11, n. 10.

⁶⁷ H.-G. Beck, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*, Munich 1978, p. 99.

⁶⁸ Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, pp. 161-62. The idea that Niketas is criticising the emperor from the position of the aristocratic opposition is supported by H. von Kap-Herr, *Die Abendländische Politik Kaiser Manuels mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Deutschland*, Amsterdam 1966, p. 128, who further claims that the author's criticism of Manuel Komnenos stems from internal disaffection at the emperor's preference to foreigners.

⁶⁹ P. Magdalino, 'Aspects of Twelfth-Century Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*', *Speculum* 58 (1983), pp. 326-46.

⁷⁰ Magdalino, *Kaiserkritik*, pp. 326-46.

altered, and if he is virtuous, affairs will again take a turn in the opposite direction.’⁷¹ But if Niketas ventured to criticise the traditional cult of the emperor, he certainly did so from the position of an intellectual and civil official active in the closing years of the twelfth century.⁷² These types of criticism, mostly evident in the discussion of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos were already voiced, albeit in a milder manner, in the original version of the text.⁷³ Although version a certainly manifests a tendency to strengthen the anti-absolutism sentiments of the historian, the bulk of Niketas’ criticism is of a different nature and conducted for a very different purpose.

The original text is a work of history dedicated to the narration of imperial deeds and produced within the imperial court circle. Therefore, it is on the whole favourable to the reigning emperor and family – Alexios III and the Komnenoi. Most information that could reflect badly on the Komnenoi and their supporters is either suppressed or distorted. What is particularly striking is that Niketas spends so little time discussing the internal administration of the Komnenoi, with the exception of that of the usurper Andronikos I, which appears to have been exemplary according to the historian. The bulk of his account centres on foreign affairs, usually wars. While this could have been where our historian’s personal interests lay, the fact that detrimental information concerning the internal policies and private lives of the emperors is underlined in version a, leads us to believe that it was intentionally suppressed in b, so as not to stain the Komnenian image. In such cases, it is obvious that the praise that accompanied the b-text often entailed factual distortions.

Yet if the praise of the b-text necessitated such distortions, so did the invective of the a-text. This is because it was invective with a specific aim and Niketas’ selection of supplementary information was usually in direct correlation with the purpose of his writing. The author was an eyewitness to the cataclysmic events of 1204 and the awareness of his role to narrate and explain the collapse of the Byzantine Empire was undoubtedly greater than any displeasure he may have had with the concept of autocratic rule. In fact, Niketas displays a remarkable consciousness of the significance and dignity of his craft when in narrating the calamitous events of 1204 and the partitioning of the empire among the crusaders and the Venetians thereafter, he cries out: ‘But now even my power of speech fails

⁷¹ Nik.Chon., p. 43/66-68: ἄτε γὰρ δι’ αὐτὸν ἀρχῆθεν γενόμενα, κακυνομένου μὲν τοῦδε, καὶ αὐτὰ μεταβάλλεται, ἀγαθυνομένου δὲ, πάλιν πρὸς τὴν ἐναντίαν φορὰν ἐπανίστασιν.

⁷² Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, pp. 160-63; Lilie, ‘Des Kaisers Macht’, pp. 75-80.

⁷³ See Appendix II (Manuel Komnenos), especially 143/43-47.

me...for how can I devote History, the most useful and beautiful invention of the Greeks, to the recounting of the deeds of the barbarians against them?’⁷⁴ This awareness was the primary motivation behind his all-encompassing revision and is most evident in his discussion of the Byzantine emperors, whose ‘deeds’ he was called upon to narrate.

We have already seen (Chapter I) how Niketas altered the title of the *Historia*, in an effort to reorientate the narrative from ‘imperial biography’ to an explanation of 1204. The fact that the emperors receive the greatest number of alterations and additions suggests that he believed them to be the main culprits. The continuous thread of Niketas’ narrative follows the thoughts and actions of individual emperors and illustrates the results that followed from their interplay. In turn, these are what gave the course of events a definite direction. But they were not chosen at random; the historian’s own process of selection and emphasis introduces, whether implicitly or explicitly, a strong element of interpretation. If we attempted to rank Niketas’ preferences, we would not have to change the chronological order of reigns. The progressive decline in the imperial dignity throughout the course of the twelfth century is by no means accidental; rather it is the central theme in Niketas’ argumentation for the collapse of Byzantium. His critical revision was aimed to highlight this at every opportunity.

Did this then result in the decadent ‘imperial type’ identified by Paul Magdalino,⁷⁵ or the stereotypical notion of the *dramatis personae* suggested by Alexander Kazhdan?⁷⁶ That is, did Niketas consciously paint a black (and often inaccurate) picture of the successive emperors in the twelfth century in order to trace the collapse of the empire to a failure of leadership? It is difficult to deny the conclusions reached by Magdalino and Kazhdan as it is obvious that all the emperors shared, to a certain extent, a series of negative traits: indolence, greediness, gluttony, prodigality, paranoia, immorality, and impiety. All the emperors spend time at the Propontis, delighting in sumptuous feasts and carefree luxurious living. Manuel I, Andronikos I, Isaakios II and Alexios III were all zealous devotees of astrology, divination and prophecy. Both Andronikos I and Alexios III dismiss the initial reports of an impending western attack and instead indulge in various entertainments.

⁷⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 580/94-95.

⁷⁵ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 11-14.

⁷⁶ Kazhdan, Introduction to *Narrazione cronologica*, I, pp. XLI-XLIII.

Manuel I, Andronikos I and Isaakios III are all guilty of a hedonistic lifestyle. Isaakios II, Alexios III and Alexios IV are guilty of sacrilege, and so on. No doubt, Niketas was creating a sensation of repetition in imperial actions in order to reproduce an almost farcical atmosphere at court characterised by the indolence and incompetence, which was then brilliantly contrasted with the final collapse looming overhead.⁷⁷

To illustrate his point the historian makes liberal use of well-established themes relating to political decline, for example the manipulation of weak and idle emperors by corrupt and unscrupulous ministers and relatives.⁷⁸ The emperors Manuel I, Isaakios II and Alexios III easily succumb to the negative influence of corrupt public officials, degenerate eunuchs and worthless chamberlains. On numerous occasions, Niketas exploits the ancient theme of the negative comparison of the wealthy and effeminate Greeks with the authentic strength of the uncorrupted barbarians.⁷⁹ In fact, the emperors Isaakios II and Alexios III are continually portrayed as weak and effeminate in comparison to the courageous and unadorned enemies of the empire. Moreover, if we take a brief look at the *New History* of Zosimos (early sixth century) and especially the portrait of Theodosios I (379-95), we would find that much like Niketas' emperors, he was accused of selling offices, imposing excessive taxation, being unduly extravagant at court, placing 'barbarians' in the military, and so on.⁸⁰ By the end of the twelfth century, these were considered as the characteristic shortcomings of any ruler who fell short of the imperial ideal,⁸¹ and Niketas would use them repeatedly.

Looking back on 1204 from his place of exile in Nicaea, it is perhaps to be expected that Niketas should hold imperial misrule responsible for the fall of Byzantium. He was not the only one to do so. The Nicaean intellectual, Nikephoros Blemmydes, wrote in his treatise on kingship (ca. 1250): 'What was it that gave our great city as prey to the Latins and filled the world with all manner of misfortunes? It was nothing but the culpable conduct of those who were then on the throne and the

⁷⁷ Kazhdan, Introduction to: *Narrazione cronologica*, I, pp. XLI-XLII.

⁷⁸ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 250.

⁷⁹ See Magdalino, *Kaiserkritik*, p. 332; K. Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren im Weltbild der Byzantiner*, Munich 1955, pp. 115ff.

⁸⁰ A. Cameron, 'Early Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*: Two Case Histories', *BMGS* 3 (1977) p. 16.

⁸¹ See Theophylact of Ochrid, *Opera*, ed. P. Gautier, CFHB, I: *Discours, traités, poesies*, Thessaloniki 1980, pp.178-211.

slackness and cowardice it bred.’⁸² If this opinion echoes the sentiments voiced by Niketas, it could well have been a generally accepted verdict within the intellectual circles at Nicaea. But these voices of the thirteenth century resonate sentiments already formulated in the late eleventh, when John Oxeites, titular patriarch of Antioch maintained that the misfortunes which the empire suffered since Alexios I Komnenos came to power (he was speaking of the Pecheneg invasions) were divine punishments for the sins of his administration.⁸³

When we compare the two versions of text, it is clear that the author does not invent a new basis of *Kaiserkritik* after 1204. The difference between the criticism of leading individuals in version b and version a is often one of degree, not principle, as Niketas’ original criticism, where present, was most often circuitous. Indeed, the author’s frustration and disillusionment with the political conditions of his own time and more specifically with the successive coups of the late twelfth century and the establishment of tyrannical governments in Byzantium is already apparent in the b-text,⁸⁴ while in the a-text it is brought to the foreground with unparalleled intensity mainly through potent, insightful and penetrating *Kaiserkritik*.

On the other hand, it is important to stress that the connection between imperial misrule, i.e. tyranny and the collapse of the empire *is* one formulated with hindsight, for in the a-text Niketas not only ventures to criticise the actions of the imperial government, but also makes an explicit connection between what he views as Byzantium’s internal disintegration and its subsequent fall to outside forces. It is precisely within this context that well-established themes of political decline are manifested and criticism turned into invective takes the centre stage. For the purposes of our discussion, we have separated the present section into three parts, which roughly correspond to Niketas’ own principles of selection and the themes he chose to emphasise in his discussion of the Byzantine Emperor: 1) Financial Policy; 2) Foreign Policy; 3) Character Depiction; 4) The Komnenian Image. A final section has been reserved for Alexios III Angelos due to the importance of Niketas’ discussion of the reign in understanding the differences between the two versions.

⁸² Quoted from Barker, *Social and political Thought*, p. 156.

⁸³ P. Gautier, ‘Diatribes de Jean l’Oxite contre Alexis Ier Comnène’, *REB* 28 (1970), pp. 31-33.

⁸⁴ See for example Niketas’ lamentation on the plight of the imperial throne, where the author warns his readers against the evils that arise from tyrannical government: Nik.Chon., p. 498/ 29 ff.

Financial Policy

One of the more significant features of Niketas' *Kaiserkritik* lies in the realm of financial policy.⁸⁵ Public finance and more specifically taxation was of particular interest for our author who began his career in the civil administration as a tax official, later supervised the collection of taxes in Philippopolis in the capacity of governor of that region, and finally presided over the Komnenian system of government at the turn of the century, as *logothetes ton sekreton*. All emperors in the *Historia*, with the notable exception of Andronikos I Komnenos are criticised, in one form or another, for their mismanagement of public finances. These criticisms, already apparent in a series of vague remarks and abstract complaints in version b, are clarified, accentuated and emphasized in version a.

For Niketas, the only emperor who displayed exemplary management of the public administration was Andronikos I Komnenos. In his 'encomium' to Andronikos (stretching to seven pages in the edition of van Dieten, 324-31), Niketas first tells that the emperor eliminated the old and detested Byzantine custom of selling public appointments.⁸⁶ He further legislated in favour of the poorest elements of the provincial population and curbed the parasitic control of the landed provincial aristocracy. The majority of the provinces increased in population, cities revived and recovered their former prosperity, and the abuses of the dreaded tax collectors were ended.⁸⁷ Niketas even includes the abolition of the traditional custom of looting shipwrecks, and attributes to the emperor a heroic speech, condemning previous administrations for failing to put an end to public corruption and other evils.⁸⁸ The author's praise, however, ends with his discussion of Andronikos Komnenos.

His criticism begins with the otherwise infallible John II Komnenos, who is reproached for his misguided policy of diverting the levies of conscripts, traditionally set aside to finance the maintenance of the fleet, into the public treasury. As a result,

⁸⁵ Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, p. 171.

⁸⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 325/34-36.

⁸⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 325/14-16.

⁸⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 326/50-328/25. The most plausible explanation for the idyllic picture painted by Niketas was suggested by Alexander Kazhdan, who believed that the author used as a source an official propagandistic pamphlet generated at the time of Andronikos' reign: 'Certain traits of Imperial Propaganda', pp. 23-24. Although modern scholarship has demonstrated that Andronikos appears to have made some genuine effort at reform, its effectiveness is rather doubtful and almost impossible to estimate. For sources corroborating Niketas' testimony see: Eustathios, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 37; Michael Choniates, I, pp. 144-48, 174-76.

Niketas claims that in his time (i.e. late twelfth/early thirteenth centuries) pirates ruled the Byzantine seas.⁸⁹ Thereafter he moves on to continual and unrelenting criticism of the policies followed by Manuel I, Isaakios II and Alexios III. In the b-text, Niketas initially describes Manuel Komnenos as being ‘free of unjust gain’, and ‘a sea of munificence.’⁹⁰ The public treasury was overflowing; from the tax collections of his father, Emperor John II, Manuel ‘distributed a portion to God and a portion to the just’. Moreover, the emperor diligently accumulated wealth.⁹¹ This state of affairs did not last long: ‘when he came to manhood, the emperor governed the affairs of state more autocratically...and suspended the flow of largesse, not because I think’, says Niketas ‘he willingly chose to do so (for things unknown one must always incline to the cause of charity), but because he needed more than the normal amount, as the outlets of his expenses were extensive and more vast than the Tyrrhenian sea’.⁹² Thus the historian excuses the severity of Manuel’s fiscal policy, but in his judgment there is cast a shadow of a doubt...‘for things unknown.’ This then is the first allusion to Manuel’s questionable expenditures.

The second allusion appears in the midst of the disastrous battle of Myriokephalon (1176) when Manuel Komnenos along with a few of the common soldiery found temporary refuge from the enemy. At one instance, the emperor took a drink of water to quench his thirst, but with one sip noticed it was polluted with blood. He immediately threw it away, wailing aloud that fortunately he had not tasted the blood of Christians. Then one of the soldiers imprudently remarked: ‘O Emperor...this is not the first time, often in the past you have become intoxicated, drinking from an entirely pure cup of Christian blood, and reaping from and gleaning your subjects.’⁹³ A little while later, the emperor noticed that the Turks were attempting to seize the imperial treasury and ordered those around him to recover the monies to which they had a greater right than the Turks. The same man stepped

⁸⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 55/5 ff. For this passage see Maisano, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, I, pp. 559-60, n. 50; H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes aux VIIe-XV siècles*, Paris 1966, pp. 230-31.

⁹⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 59/13-14.

⁹¹ Nik.Chon., p. 59/24 ff.

⁹² Nik.Chon., p. 60/36-44 b: ἐς γὰρ ἄνδρας ἐλάσας ἀρχικώτερόν τε ἤψατο τῶν πραγμάτων...καὶ τὴν τῆς φιλοδωρίας συνέστειλεν ἔκροισιν, οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ γνωμικοῦ δὲ οἶμαι τοσοῦτον αἰτίου (χρὴ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ἀδύλοις ῥέπειν πρὸς τὸ φιλόανθρωπον), ὅσον ἐκ τοῦ μὴ κοτύλης δεῖσθαι ψηγμάτων, ἀλλ’ ἀντικρυς πελάγους Τυρσινηκοῦ ἃς εἶχεν εὐρύνας διεξόδους τῶν δαπανῶν. For this passage see Appendix II.

⁹³ Nik.Chon., p. 186/60-63: ἄπαγε, βασιλεῦ, οὐκ οὐκ ταῦτα, οὐχὶ οὐ γὰρ νῦν πρῶτως, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσαι καὶ πολλάκις καὶ εἰς κραιπάλην καὶ ἄγαν ἀκραιφνῆς Χριστιανικῶν αἱμάτων κρατὴρ ἐκεράσθη σοι, καλαμωμένῳ τε καὶ ἐπιφυλλίζοντι τὸ ὑπήκοον.

forward to say: 'You should have offered these willingly to the Romans earlier, not now, when they can only be taken with difficulty and bloodshed.'⁹⁴

It is difficult to imagine that in an authoritarian society such as Byzantium a common rank-and-file soldier would have spoken in such an insulting manner to the emperor. Niketas is not here reporting an actual conversation, but merely attributing his own opinions and criticisms of Manuel Komnenos' severe taxation policy to the anonymous common man.⁹⁵ In the absence of professional independence, this type of fictitious speech often served as a tool of expression and criticism in version b of the text. Indeed, Niketas brilliantly exploits this ancient technique to apply criticism on numerous occasions. Characteristic examples are the speech attributed to the Vlacho-Bulgarian rebel leader Asan,⁹⁶ and the intimidating boasts and veiled threats made by the ambassadors of the German Emperor Henry VI in 1196.⁹⁷ If these were not completely fictitious dialogues, they were certainly embellished by Niketas so as to furnish the exact meaning the historian wished them to convey.⁹⁸

Elsewhere, Niketas states: 'Most Roman Emperors make use of public properties as though they were their own', certainly alluding to Manuel, but not mentioning him by name. This impersonal formula, i.e. 'most emperors', much like fictitious dialogue, is a technique often utilised by Niketas in circuitous application of *Kaiserkritik*.⁹⁹ In fact, the only time that he applies direct criticism to Manuel's fiscal policy is in the a-text, thus revealing that 'things unknown' were really 'things concealed'. In a series of passages that are found only in the a-text (203/75-206/47), Niketas begins by somewhat ironically stating: 'I will not conceal that Manuel strove to increase taxation'. Heading his list of criticisms is that the emperor's excessive expenditures were largely financed from burdensome and inefficient taxation of the provinces carried out by corrupt officials.¹⁰⁰ These revenues, says Niketas, were then wasted on needless munificence, excessive endowments to monasteries and churches, the Latin communes, his kinsmen and close friends, not to mention his mistress

⁹⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 186/71-73: ἐχρῆν, λέγων, ἐκουσίως καὶ πρότερον διδόναι, 'Ρωμαίοις ταυτί, οὐχὶ δὲ πάντως νυνί, ὅτε ἡ κτήσις δυσχερὴς καὶ μεθ' αἵματος.

⁹⁵ I cannot agree with Herbert Hunger's assessment that these references should be taken at face value: *Literatur*, I, p. 435.

⁹⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 466/46ff.

⁹⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 477/66ff.

⁹⁸ Niketas' use of the ancient technique of the fictitious speech will be examined in detail in chapter IV.

⁹⁹ For further examples of this formula see pp. 95/29, 209/59-60, 405/21-23, 530/53-55.

¹⁰⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 205/15ff.

Theodora, who along with their illegitimate children received ‘seas of money’.¹⁰¹ Finally, the historian lays particular stress on the negative effects of Manuel’s reliance upon foreigners. With a characteristic disdain, he admonishes the emperor’s practice of appointing these foreigners, who could hardly speak Greek, to judicial posts and for entrusting them with the assessing and raising of taxes, often preferring them to Greeks because he found them more dependable. The results of this policy, according to Niketas, were to breed corruption in the fiscal administration and resentment against the government among the native Byzantines.¹⁰²

This long addition forms the basis for all modern negative assessments of Manuel Komnenos regarding his domestic policies.¹⁰³ Although clearly formulated with hindsight, echoes of this line of criticism were implicit in the original text, both in Niketas’ statement of doubt concerning Manuel’s expenditures, and in the bitter reproaches of the common soldier at Myriokephalon. Independent evidence supports the testimony of Niketas regarding the presence of foreigners in Manuel’s court.¹⁰⁴ In fact, the historian of the Latin East, William of Tyre, goes so far as to claim that ‘Manuel relied so implicitly on the fidelity and ability of the Latins that he passed over the Greeks as soft and effeminate and entrusted important affairs to the Latins alone.’¹⁰⁵ Yet these vague and slanted remarks should be treated with extreme caution, for there exists no tangible evidence to verify that Latins were appointed to either judicial or fiscal positions, or that indeed they received preferential treatment under the regime of Manuel Komnenos.¹⁰⁶

Fiscal oppression and excessive expenditure seem to be borne out by other sources.¹⁰⁷ It is impossible to verify the extent of the emperor’s ‘largesse’ towards the

¹⁰¹ Nik.Chon., p. 204/79-2. Niketas had already criticised Manuel’s attempt to reform army finance by issuing the so-called ‘grants of the *paroikoi*’ in version b: p. 208/16ff. On the heavily-debated question of Niketas’ ‘grants of the *paroikoi*’ and its relationship to ‘*pronoia*’ see: G. Ostrogorsky, ‘Die *pronoia* unter der Komnenen’, *ZRVI* 12 (1970), pp. 41-54; A. Hohlweg, ‘Zur Frage der *pronoia* in Byzanz’, *BZ* 60 (1967), pp. 288-308; *ODB* 3, p. 1734; J. Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army: 1081-1180*, Leiden 2002, pp. 172-79.

¹⁰² Nik. Chon., pp. 204/3-205/39.

¹⁰³ On the influence of Niketas in the assessment of the Manuel I Komnenos by modern historians see: Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 1-26.

¹⁰⁴ See William of Tyre, II, p. 461; Georges and Dèmètrios Tornikès, *Lettres et Discours*, ed. J. Darrouzès, Paris 1970, p. 129, and discussions in Chalandon, *Les Comnène*, II, pp. 226-27 and Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, pp. 233-40.

¹⁰⁵ William of Tyre, II, p. 461.

¹⁰⁶ See Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 223; Christophilopoulou, *Βυζαντινή Ιστορία*, pp. 154-59; J. Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, Hambledon & London 2003, pp. 112-13.

¹⁰⁷ For fiscal oppression see the speech of Michael Choniates to the new *praitor* of Hellas, Demetrios Drimys, appointed by Andronikos I in Michael Choniates, I, pp. 157-79. Also discussions in

Latin merchant communities in the empire, monasteries and rapacious relatives, but there is no doubt that it existed.¹⁰⁸ In any case, what is of particular importance for us is not whether Niketas' criticism contained an element of exaggeration or not, but rather the purpose of the supplementary information. On the one hand, it is obvious that Niketas was merely supplying us with information that he could not include in the b-text. On the other, it seems that our historian wished to demonstrate that Manuel Komnenos fell short of the Byzantine *Kaiseridee*. It is, after all, not coincidental that his criticisms concerning fiscal oppression, excessive munificence and preferential treatment of 'barbarians' were conventional themes of *Kaiserkritik*.¹⁰⁹

Isaakios II Angelos is another emperor, who is heavily criticised by Niketas for his mismanagement of public finances.¹¹⁰ In version b, Niketas testifies that the emperor lavished gifts upon churches, shrines and monasteries, erected guest houses and hospitals, dispensed monetary relief to those citizens in need and remitted the taxes of entire cities.¹¹¹ These sorts of expenses do not on the surface appear to provide solid grounds for criticism. However, the historian claims that precisely because of his excessive spending, Isaakios lacked funds, and thus resorted to the collection of revenues from illegal sources and to the contrivance of new taxes.¹¹² This line of criticism is developed in version a, where the historian provides us a more detailed description of Isaakios' fiscal policies (444/3-7 om. b):

He [Isaakios] adulterated the silver and issued debased coinage. His collection of monies was not wholly without reproach as he increased the public taxes and squandered the monies on profligate living. He put the public offices up for sale in the same way that vendors sell fruit.¹¹³

Chalandon, *Les Comnène*, II, pp. 623-26; Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, pp. 257-60 and Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 171-79.

¹⁰⁸ In any case, the distribution of largesse was considered an imperial duty. See M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy C. 300-1450*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 198-99.

¹⁰⁹ See Synesios, *Synesii Cyrenensis opuscula*, N. Terzaghi (ed.), Rome 1944. Engl. trans. *The Essays and Hymns of Synesius the Cyrene*, A. Fitzgerald, London 1930, on fiscal oppression and excessive spending: pp. 113-14, 141. For preferential treatment of foreigners see Kekaumenos, *Cekaumeni strategicon et incerti scriptoris de officiis regiis libellus*, ed. B. Wassiliewsky & V. Jernsted, St. Petersburg 1896, p. 95.

¹¹⁰ Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, pp. 172-73.

¹¹¹ Nik.Chon., p. 444/11ff; On the contrary, Niketas praises Isaakios for his φιλανθρωπία in *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 94/28-95/7.

¹¹² Nik.Chon., p. 445/39-45; Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, pp. 172-73.

¹¹³ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀργύριον κιβδηλεύσας ἀδόκιμον τὸ νόμισμα κέκοφε καὶ τὴν τῶν χρημάτων συλλογὴν οὐκ ἀνέγκλητον ἐποιεῖτο παντάπασι τὰς τε τῶν δημοσίων φόρων εἰσπράξεις ἐπέτεινε καὶ περὶ τὴν τῶν τούτων ἀπόχρησιν ἡσωτεύετο. καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς προύβαλλεν εἰς ἐξώνησιν, ὡς τὰς ὁπώρας οἱ ἀγοραῖοι.

Later in the narrative, just at the point where Niketas begins his discussion of the Fourth Crusade, he returns to the theme of the collection of revenues. The difference between version b and version a is telling (537/50-58):

The Angeloi brothers mismanaged affairs in other ways, as we have already said. They especially did not set aside the collected revenues, but poured them out with both hands, wasting them on consumption that was utterly useless to the public. Not only did they glean and deal hardly with the Roman cities, but they also taxed the members of the Latin nations (=b).¹¹⁴

The Angeloi brothers mismanaged affairs in other ways, as we have already said. As they were especially obsessed with the love of money, they were not satisfied at enriching themselves from legitimate sources, neither did they set aside collected revenues, but poured them out with both hands on needless care and opulent ornamentation of the body, and more so enriched courtesans and relatives who were utterly useless to the public. Not only did they glean and deal hardly with the Roman cities, inventing new taxes... (=VAP).

The accusations against Isaakios are clear: 1) He debased the coinage; 2) He put public offices up for sale; 3) The revenues from his oppressive taxation came from new and illegal sources; 4) He wasted public funds on the enrichment of relatives and concubines. While it is certain that Isaakios adulterated the silver coinage,¹¹⁵ it is very difficult to assess the accuracy of Niketas' other allegations mainly because our other contemporary or near contemporary sources for the reign of Isaakios II are mainly encomiasts writing at his court.¹¹⁶ However, the sale of

¹¹⁴ οἱ Ἀγγελώνυμοι κασίγνητοι καὶ ἄλλως μὲν πλημμελῶς διώκουν τὰ τῆς ἀρχῆς, ὡς ἤδη λέξαντες ἔχομεν, μάλιστα δὲ μὴ ξυνέχοντες τὰ συλλεγόμενα χρήματα ἐξέφερον ἀμφοτέραις αὐτὰ πλέον δὲ εἰς ἀλυσιτελῇ τῷ κοινῷ παντάπασιν ἀναλώματα.

¹¹⁵ Pontani, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, II, p. 778, n.139. Also M. Hendy, *Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire, 1081-1261*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 12, Washington DC, 1969, pp. 220-21; Idem, *Byzantine Monetary Economy*, p. 518.

¹¹⁶ See especially M. Bachmann, *Die Rede des Johannes Syropoulos an den Kaiser Isaak II. Angelos (1185-1195) (Text und Kommentar) nebst Beiträgen zur Geschichte des Kaisers aus zeitgenössischen rhetorischen Quellen*, Munich 1935. Most modern estimates of Isaakios' reign are based on Niketas. See for example: F. Cognasso, 'Un imperatore bizantino della decadenza: Isacco II Angelo', *Bessarione* 31 (1915), pp. 29-60, 247-89 (saw the financial condition of the empire in a state of general deterioration after 1180 and held Isaakios responsible for hastening the final collapse); Varzos, II, p. 835, characterised Isaakios' internal policy as 'disastrous'; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 105-111, offered a more or less negative view on Isaakios' financial policies; Christophilopoulou,

public appointments was almost standard Byzantine practice, and as we have already seen, Niketas had shown his aversion to this traditional aspect of Byzantine administration by praising the efforts of Andronikos I Komnenos to stamp it out.¹¹⁷ Moreover, it is significant that the accusation concerning new and illegal sources of taxation appears in both versions of the text, and the historian specifically cites (albeit in a rather cryptic manner) the excessive demands made upon the Vlachs in the region of Anchialos as the reason, or at least the pretext for the catastrophic Vlacho-Bulgarian revolt.¹¹⁸ Yet we should be wary of Niketas' statement that Isaakios was 'obsessed with the love of money', for this trait was often associated with tyrannical rule.¹¹⁹

In truth, very little is known of Isaakios' taxation policy. In his panegyric to Isaakios II, Michael Choniates makes mention of the poverty of the imperial treasury and ascribes it to the emperor's extremely beneficent nature – in other words his excessive spending.¹²⁰ In the same speech, he tells us that Isaakios decreased taxation,¹²¹ but later on refers to imperial letters being sent out to Greece in order to curb the corruption of civil officials and alleviate the burdens of the local population.¹²² Niketas contradicts himself in the same manner when he testifies that Isaakios wasted the public revenues on relatives and concubines and later twice complains that Alexios III wasted all the revenues amassed by his brother for the purposes of military spending.¹²³ It should, however, be stressed that the charges against the emperor's fiscal policy are found in both versions of the text. What we are offered in the a-text is a clearer formulation of the accusations, as well as the important supplementary information relating to the debasement of the

Βυζαντινή Ιστορία, pp. 204-05 maintains that the Byzantine economy was in bad condition under Isaakios.

¹¹⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 325/34-36.

¹¹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 368/47-52. Niketas' significant passage on the origins of the Vlacho-Bulgarian revolt has been variously interpreted. See especially: Ph. Malingoudis, 'Die Nachrichten des Niketas Choniates über die Entstehung des zweiten Bulgarischen Staates', *Bvζ* 10 (1980), pp. 51-147; R. Wolff, 'The Second Bulgarian Empire: Its Origins and History to 1204', *Speculum* 24 (1949), pp. 167-206; G. Cankova-Petkova, 'La libération de la Bulgarie de la domination byzantine', *Byzantino-Bulgarica* 5 (1978), pp. 95-121, esp. 97; L. Mavrommatis, 'La formation du royaume bulgare vue par les intellectuels byzantins', *Études balkaniques* 21/4 (1985), pp. 30-38, esp. 33; Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 134-35, n. 99; Pontani, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, pp. 699-700, n. 59.

¹¹⁹ Theophylact of Ochrid, *Opera*, I, p. 197.

¹²⁰ Michael Choniates, I, pp. 237, 252.

¹²¹ Michael Choniates, I, pp. 235-236, 242.

¹²² Michael Choniates, I, pp. 253-254.

¹²³ Nik.Chon., pp. 454/32, 460/72; Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, pp. 172-73.

coinage, the sale of appointments and how exactly the revenues of state were wasted.

In all, it is clear that Niketas' criticism in the a-text was aimed to illustrate 'how' the finances of the state were repeatedly mismanaged by emperors who chose to fund their extravagant policies and profligate lifestyles by oppressive and erratic taxation. We should, however, always be mindful of the fact that these types of criticisms were the stock-in-trade of Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*.

Foreign Policy

Niketas is as critical of mismanagement of 'foreign policy' (and here I mean quite simply Byzantium's dealings with foreign states) as he is of the mismanagement of state finances.¹²⁴ Again, not surprisingly, all emperors in the *Historia* (with the exception of John II Komnenos) are criticised for somehow mishandling the affairs of Byzantium with other states, either because of a lack of foresight and prudence, or simply because of their own slackness and negligence. In version b, it is quite evident that the historian personally admired Manuel I Komnenos for his often aggressive policy towards foreign states, and for that reason he is, on occasion, prepared to excuse the failures of this emperor and conduct a vigorous defence of the continual twists and turns of Manuel's foreign entanglements in the face of vociferous internal opposition.¹²⁵ In the b-text, he tells us twice that Manuel feared that one day the neighbouring Latin nations would join together and overrun the empire and desperately strove to prevent this occurrence by curbing their power before it had fully developed!¹²⁶ With the benefit of hindsight and a deeper appreciation of events afforded by the lapse of time he adds the famous passage in version a (203/75-204/78 om. Wb):

¹²⁴ See Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, pp. 173-74.

¹²⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 100/40-45. Characteristic of this attitude is Niketas' apologetic stance concerning Manuel's Italian wars: τοιοῦτον μὲν εἰλήφει πέρας τὰ κατὰ Σικελίαν τε καὶ Καλαβρίαν τοῦ βασιλέως Μανουὴλ ἀγωνίσματα, λαμπρὰ μὲν καὶ πλεῖστα τῶν χρημάτων ἐκεῖσε μετηγγικότα, εἰς οὐδὲν δὲ τέλος εὐχρηστον Ῥωμαίοις κατηντηκότα ἢ εὐσπούδαστον τοῖς ὕστερον αὐτοκράτορσιν. ἀλλὰ τί πρὸς τὸν ἡγωνισμένον εἶπη τι ἂν καὶ οὕτω προθύμως ἡμελλόμενον, ὡς εἶη παραστησάμενος τὸ ἀλλόφυλον; Eustathios of Thessaloniki also defends the emperor's policies: *Eustathii metropolitae Thessalonicensis Opuscula*, ed, G. L. F. Tafel, Frankfurt 1832 (repr. 1964), p. 199.

¹²⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 199/45, 203/58ff.

That [Manuel] thought and acted in a good and wise manner, later events clearly demonstrated, for shortly after his death, circumstances, which had lost a wise captain, almost sank the ship of state.¹²⁷

As van Dieten has suggested, this passage not only reveals Niketas' knowledge of the events of 1204, but also presupposes the rebuilding of the state at Nicaea.¹²⁸ For our purposes, it demonstrates that Niketas was preoccupied with providing an explanation for the collapse of Byzantium while revising his work, and that he was prepared to give credit to imperial policy where he believed credit was due. At other times, however, he is not so generous. A case in point is his harsh criticism of the emperor's belief in astrology. The author expresses his disapproval of Manuel's unwavering faith in astrology and various omens and prophecies rather openly in the b-text, and it is significant that he was not the only contemporary or near contemporary writer to do so.¹²⁹ His additions in the a-text, however, serve to illustrate how this faith was injurious to the affairs of state. He narrates two specific incidents, whereby he demonstrates how Manuel's reliance on astrology had devastating consequences. The first concerns the decision for the timing of the departure of the Byzantine fleet, commanded by Constantine Angelos, to Sicily during the Italian campaign in 1154 (95/29-96/3):

<p>Because almost all powerful men of past and present hold the belief that the fortunes and incidents of human life are influenced by the reverse and forward motions of the stars and by their positions, as well as the configurations of the planets, their proximity and distance and all the other things that</p>	<p>Manuel held the blameworthy belief that the fortunes and incidents of human life are influenced by the reverse and forward motions of the stars [...] and all the other things that astrologers say and attribute to divine providence by deceptively introducing such phrases as 'it was decreed', and 'the</p>
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¹²⁷ ὅτι μέντι καλῶς τε καὶ εὐφρόνως διανοεῖτο οὕτω καὶ διεπράττετο, σαφῶς ὑπέδειξε τὰ μετέπειτα, ἥνίκα τὴν μὲν ἐνταῦθα ζωὴν αὐτὸς μετηλλάχει, τὰ δέ γε πράγματα κυβερνήτην ἀποβαλόντα σοφὸν μικροῦ τὸ τῇ βασιλείᾳ σκάφος ἐβάπτισαν.

¹²⁸ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCIV.

¹²⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 95/29ff., 146/36-41, 151/72-74, 220/23ff. This is not surprising when we consider that Manuel had written, or commissioned an apology of astrology in response to a monk from the Pantokrator monastery, who had composed a speech condemning astrology as heresy. In turn, Michael Glykas wrote a highly critical refutation of Manuel's defence in an attempt to illustrate that astrology was incompatible with the Christian faith. For the text see Michael Glykas, *Εἰς τὰς ἀπορίας τῆς Θεῆας Γραφῆς κεφάλαια*, ed. S. Eustratiades I, Athens 1906, pp. 476-500. For the author: K. Krumbacher, 'Michael Glykas, eine Skizze seiner Biographie und seiner litterarischen Thätigkeit nebst einem unedierten Gedichte und Briefe desselben', *Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, philosophisch-philologisch und historische Klasse, Munich 1894, III, pp. 391-460. For Manuel's text: Michael Glykas, I, pp. ξζ'-πθ'.

astrologers say, Angelos' departure was deemed perfect according to the favourable configuration that the stars exhibited. The assurance of the tables of the astronomical sphere was in no way beneficial to Roman affairs nor did it rectify the errors of previous commanders or transform the adversity, which occurred. For Angelos, thoughtless in his voyage to Sicily, was taken prisoner by Sicilian triremes that were guarding the seas and led captive to the King (=Wb).¹³⁰

decrees of necessity are unalterable and irreversible'. He thus deemed Angelos' departure perfect [...] but what happened? The sun had not yet set, when Constantine returned on the emperor's command. The reason was the bad timing of the departure, for Angelos had set out when there was no favourable configuration of the stars to decree such an action nor the precision offered by the tables of the astronomical sphere, but as the babblers conceded, they had spoken falsely and made something out of nothing, and thus were mistaken in finding the perfect timing for the departure. Once again the horoscope was cast and the astrological tables consulted. After a long search of the stars, thought and observation, Angelos departed, urged by the movements of the stars. So beneficial was the timing of the departure to the affairs of the Romans [...] that Constantine fell straightway into the hands of the enemy! (=VAP).

The difference between the two versions lies so much in what happened, but rather in how and why it happened. The implication that Manuel Komnenos decided on the timing of the departure is, of course, present in version b. And so is Niketas' disapproval of astrology. However, it is significant to note that the blame is placed on Angelos who was 'thoughtless' in his voyage, and not on the emperor. In the a-text, Niketas not only refers to Manuel explicitly, but also inserts seemingly trivial details so as to ridicule the entire episode. His sarcastic ending remarks were but the finishing touch. The only conclusion to be drawn from the text offered in version a is that the emperor himself was responsible for the failure of the expedition. In this way

¹³⁰ ἐπεὶ δὲ σχεδὸν ἅπασιν δοκεῖ τοῖς μέγα δυναμένοις πάλαι καὶ σήμερον ὡς πρὸς τὰς τύχας συναίρονται καὶ τὰ κατὰ τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον συναντήματα οἱ τῶν ἀστέρων ἀναποδισμοὶ καὶ προποδισμοὶ καὶ αἱ θέσεις αὗται καὶ τὰ τοιάδε τῶν πλανήτων σχήματα, οἱ πλησιασμοὶ τε καὶ ἀποστάσεις, καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ὅσα οἱ ἀστρολέσχαι φασὶν, ἀπακριβοῦται τῷ Ἀγγέλῳ ἢ ἔξοδος, ὡς οἱ τῶν ἀστέρων ἀγαθοὶ σχηματισμοὶ ἐνεδίδωσαν. οὐδ' ὅλως δὲ ἡ ἀσφάλεια τῶν τῆς ἀστρονομουμένης σφαίρας κανόνων τὰ Ῥωμαίων ὤνησε πράγματα ἢ τὰ τῶν πρώην ἀρχηγῶν ἀνώρθωσε πταίσματα καὶ εἴ τι ἀντίξουν συμβέβηκε μετεσκεύασεν, ἀπερισκέπτως γὰρ ἐς Σικελίαν τὸν πλοῦν ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος συνελήφθη ταῖς θαλασσοφυλακούσαις Σικελικαῖς τριήρεσι καὶ ἤχθη παρὰ τὸν ῥῆγα αἰχμάλωτος.

then, Niketas demonstrates how Manuel's belief in astrology was damaging to the affairs of state.

The author reinforces this point in another episode that appears only in version a (154/43-55 om. b). In an incident that occurred during the Hungarian expedition of 1167, Manuel sent a letter to his general Andronikos Kontostephanos, ordering him to desist from any military engagement on that particular day because the position of the stars was unfavourable, and further designating the day when the battle should be waged. Kontostephanos ignored the letter, proceeded to engage in combat and was victorious due to 'superior generalship.'¹³¹ Thus were it not for Kontostephanos, Manuel would have committed a serious error yet again. The moral of the story is that success does not depend on the position of the stars, and Niketas reproaches Manuel for 'obeying the words of astrologers as though they were equal to judgments coming from God's throne.'¹³²

It is perhaps to be expected that John Kinnamos, who wrote a quasi-official history of the reign of John II and Manuel I Komnenos, contradicts Niketas on both accounts.¹³³ According to Kinnamos, Constantine Angelos departed for the expedition earlier than he should have and without awaiting reinforcements from Constantinople. This was done contrary to Manuel's wishes, who in a letter had advised Angelos not to encounter the Sicilian fleet without reinforcements.¹³⁴ This comes very close to Niketas' account in version b, where the 'thoughtless' Angelos is held responsible for the ultimate failure.¹³⁵ Concerning the episode during the Hungarian expedition, Kinnamos is at great pains to show that Manuel, although absent from the battle, directed Kontostephanos in the preparations and strategy that should be followed and makes no mention whatsoever of a letter ordering the general

¹³¹ For the victory see Nik.Chon., p. 157/48-52.

¹³² Nik.Chon., p. 154/51-55 om. b: ἐπεὶ καὶ ἦν τὰς πλείστας καὶ μεγίστας τῶν πράξεων καὶ παρὰ θεοῦ τὸ πέρασ κατ' εὐδοκίαν εἴτε καὶ μὴ δεχομένας ταῖς τῶν ἄστρον οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως περιπλοκαῖς καὶ ταῖς τοιαῖσδε θέσεσι καὶ κινήσεσιν ἐπανατιθεῖς καὶ τοῖς παρὰ τῶν ἀστρολεσχούντων λεγομένοις καθυπαγόμενος ἴσα ταῖς ἐκ θρανίδος θεοῦ ἀποφάσεσιν. The comparison is not chosen at random, for according to the Byzantine *Kaiseridee*, the 'pious' emperor should seek divine direction for all his actions. See Synesios, p. 143.

¹³³ For Kinnamos and Niketas see Kap-Herr, *Politik Kaiser Manuels*, pp. 119-31; Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 18-21,

¹³⁴ Kinnamos, pp. 120-21.

¹³⁵ On the whole Niketas' account of the Italian Wars is highly confused and chronologically inaccurate. Constantine Angelos was taken captive after the naval battle of 1154. Niketas, however, dates this episode close to 1158, shortly before the peace agreement between Byzantium and Sicily. See Chalandon, *Les Comnène*, II, pp. XXIX-XXX; Kap-Herr, *Politik Kaiser Manuels*, p. 124.

to desist.¹³⁶ The truth of matter cannot now be established, but if when we take into account that Niketas had already alluded to Manuel's implication in the timing of the departure of the fleet in 1154 in version b, it is more likely that version a is based on information that the historian had acquired at the time of the original composition, but felt he should not include. For Niketas, Manuel's belief in astrology was perhaps the emperor's greatest flaw. His criticism in version a had the explicit purpose of accentuating it at every opportunity.

In the same light one should view Niketas' criticism of the foreign policy of Andronikos I Komnenos, and more specifically the emperor's failure to repel the Norman invasion of 1185. In the b-text Niketas tells us that Andronikos had made adequate preparations in anticipation of the Norman onslaught. He had dispatched a commander (John Branas) to defend Dyrrachion and had sent messages to the governor of Thessaloniki, David Komnenos, instructing him on how to withstand the impending siege. He had furthermore assembled forces from the eastern and western provinces to assist in the defence of the city and trap the enemy in the Balkans.¹³⁷ This force, however, due to the slackness of its commanders, failed to bring relief to the besieged city, which fell mainly due to the treachery of its governor, David Komnenos.¹³⁸ This version of events is more or less consistent with the information provided by Eustathios of Thessaloniki, who claims that Andronikos' only mistake was that he appointed David Komnenos governor.¹³⁹

Although Niketas does not change his story in version a, he adds a lengthy section that concerns Andronikos' reaction to the capture of the city and the subsequent advance of the Norman army through the Balkans (320/77-322/55 om. b). He begins by telling us that Andronikos strengthened the fortifications of the capital and put a fleet of one hundred ships in the Golden Horn ready to sail at a moment's

¹³⁶ Kinnamos, pp. 270ff.

¹³⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 318/22-44. Andronikos' son John was given command of Philippopolis, while command of the rest of the relief army was divided among Theodore Choumnos, the *chartoularios*, Andronikos Palaiologos, the *parakoimomenos*, Nikephoros and Alexios Branas. Eustathios adds the names of Manuel Kamytzes and Alexios Gidos, *megas domestikos* of the East.

¹³⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 296/70-308/19.

¹³⁹ Eustathios is more detailed and perhaps more objective than Niketas, who simply dismisses the army commanders as lazy and incompetent. According to Eustathios, the army was instructed by Andronikos not to enter the city and not to engage the enemy in battle: *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 73, 81 (on David Komnenos). For modern accounts of these events and Andronikos' reaction see F. Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicile*, Paris 1907 (repr. New York 1960, II, pp. 392-418; W. Hecht, *Die byzantinische Aussenpolitik zur Zeit der letzten Komnenenkaiser (1180-1185)*, Neustadt/Aisch 1967, pp. 180-86; O. Jurewicz, *Andronikos I Komnenos*, Amsterdam 1970, p. 110ff; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 160-75.

notice. Thereafter, says Niketas, and here is where the addition actually begins, Andronikos felt satisfied with the measures he had taken to protect the western provinces and Constantinople from impending onslaught, and thereafter relaxed his efforts. When the news that the empire's second city had been taken and sacked arrived in Constantinople, he addressed the citizens, playing down the seriousness of the event and boasting of a future triumph. These, says Niketas, were deceptive excuses used to soothe the currents of rebellion dangerously rising among the frightened populace. But in truth, 'Andronikos was not man enough to repel the barbarians.'

The historian continues by relating Andronikos' subsequent activities. The emperor made no plans whatsoever to impede the Norman advance through the Balkans, but instead occupied himself with various amusements and voluptuous entertainments. He ridicules Andronikos by portraying a man who was obsessed with his own sexuality; the emperor applied exotic ointments to himself and ate strange foods in order to enhance his performance. He was always escorted by his 'barbarian' bodyguard, a group of uneducated men who did not speak Greek, and entrusted his own protection to a watch-dog.

On this occasion, Niketas' supplementary remarks should be treated with extreme caution for it is clear that the nature of the information is highly subjective and completely unverifiable. Because the author could not criticise Andronikos on strategy and preparation, for it appears that the emperor had truly taken adequate defensive measures, he attacked him on a personal level. Indeed, sexual promiscuity and 'barbarian' escorts were not chosen at random; they were the characteristic marks of a tyrant.¹⁴⁰ Revising his text thirty years after the event, and more importantly after he had witnessed the subjugation of Byzantium to western 'barbarians', Niketas wished to highlight and even exaggerate what he perceived to be inactivity on the part of the imperial government. In this way, he connected events such as the capture of Thessaloniki and the capture of Constantinople, and drew parallels among emperors, such as Andronikos and Alexios III. The bloody conquest of Thessaloniki was a prelude to that of Constantinople, and the actions of Andronikos – playing down reports of the advance of the enemy forces and idly passing his time, would foreshadow those of Alexios III. Of course this is never clearly stated in the text, but

¹⁴⁰ Theophylact of Ochrid, *Opera*, I, pp. 193, 197.

it demonstrates the mastery behind our author's narrative method; a consistent argument that is effected through analogy and the gradual building of an atmosphere of decline and decadence.

Niketas follows the same method with regard to his criticism of Isaakios II Angelos' foreign policy.¹⁴¹ According to the historian, one of Isaakios' weakest points was his handling of the Vlacho-Bulgarian insurrection.¹⁴² Although Isaakios undertook no less than five military campaigns against the Vlacho-Bulgarians, he always returned unsuccessful. Niketas explains this on the grounds that the emperor was unable to bring them to fulfilment because he never stayed on campaign long enough, nor did he take the necessary measures to prevent the spread of the rebellion.¹⁴³ Isaakios is further criticised for his erratic stance towards the German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, and his feeble attitude towards the Turks.¹⁴⁴ The general Alexios Branas is given the credit for the triumphant defeat over the Normans

¹⁴¹ It is rather significant that Niketas personally served Isaakios, holding among others, the posts of imperial undersecretary (βασιλικὸς ὑπογραμματεὺς) where by his own testimony, he accompanied the emperor in a campaign against the Vlacho-Bulgarians (1187), governor of Philippopolis, *logothetes grammatikos* (λογοθετικὸς γραμματικός), judge of the velum (κριτὴς τοῦ βήλου) and *ephoros* (ἐφορος). Therefore, Niketas had access to a host of detailed knowledge of several aspects of the reign as well as to the emperor himself. Moreover, his orations to Isaakios reveal his intimate knowledge of military campaigns and Isaakios' dealings with foreign rulers. Niketas' orations to Isaakios deal with the following topics: n. 1 (pp. 3-6, ca. 1190/91) Isaakios' struggle and his preparations for a campaign against the rebellious Vlachs and Bulgars; n. 2 (pp. 6-13, 1187) The emperor's military success against the Cumans; n. 4 (pp. 26-35, ca. 191/92) On the emperor's return to Constantinople after a great victory over Stephen Nemanja and the visit to Bela III, King of Hungary; n. 5 (pp. 35-44, ca. 1185/86) On Isaakios' marriage to Maria of Hungary; n. 9 (pp. 68-85, 1190) on the feast of Epiphany. On the dating and interpretation of these speeches see van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 58-95, 116-17.

¹⁴² Lilie, 'Des Kaisers Macht', p. 106, places this insurrection in the category of provincial unrests that point to the weakening of the central administration in the provinces under the Angeloi. Yet the Vlacho-Bulgarian insurrection that led to the creation of the Second Bulgarian empire was quite different – both in motivation and purpose – from the various revolts carried out by native Byzantines in the provinces.

¹⁴³ Nik.Chon., pp. 372/50-373/67, 394 ff., 428/63ff., 436/89-437/23. In 1187, Niketas himself, in the capacity of under secretary, accompanied Isaakios II on his campaign against the Vlacho-Bulgarian rebels and their Cuman allies in the region of Beroe. Near Lardea, the Byzantine army barely escaped a disastrous defeat (396/78-398/42), commemorated by Niketas as a victory in an official communication to the patriarch and the Holy Synod: *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 6-12, as well as 26-34, 85-101 (more information on the Vlacho-Bulgarian revolt). For modern accounts see, Malingoudis, *Nachrichten*, pp. 73-81; Cognasso, 'Isacco II Angelo', pp. 44-47, 52-59; Wolff, 'The Second Bulgarian Empire', pp. 167-206; R. Guiland, 'Byzance et les Balkans sous le règne d'Isaac II Ange (1185-1195)', *Actes du XIIe congrès international d'études byzantines*, (Orchrid 1961), Belgrade 1964, II, pp. 125-37; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 88-92, 94-96; Cankova-Petkova, 'La libération de la Bulgarie', pp. 95-121.

¹⁴⁴ Nik.Chon., pp. 401/21-417/64, 367/26-368/46 (For the treaty between Isaakios II and the Seljuk Sultan Kilij Arslan II see Dölger-Wirth, *Regesten*, no. 1567. On the Third Crusade see: C. M. Brand, 'The Byzantines and Saladin, 1185-1192: Opponents of the Third Crusade', *Speculum* 37 (1962), pp. 167-81; Idem, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 177-88; K. Zimmert, 'Der deutsch-byzantinische Konflikt vom Juli 1189 bis Februar 1190', *BZ* 12 (1903), pp. 42-77; E. N. Johnson, 'The Crusades of Frederick Barbarossa and Henry VI', *The Later Crusades: 1189-1311*, II, *A History of the Crusades*, ed. K. M. Setton, Philadelphia 1962, pp. 87-12; Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 127ff.

in 1185 and the emperor's brother in-law, Conrad of Montferrat, is held responsible for crushing the dangerous rebellion of Branas in 1186.¹⁴⁵ Niketas minimises Isaakios' victory over the Serbs (1191/92),¹⁴⁶ and altogether omits the capture of Dyrrachion (1186) and the Turkish campaign of 1192.¹⁴⁷

The picture that emerges of the sovereign is one of weakness and incompetence. In order to accentuate the failures of Isaakios II in version a, Niketas inserts, usually in direct speech, a series of boastful remarks supposedly made by Isaakios himself on several occasions where the Byzantines appeared to have gained victory over their enemies. The first instance relates to a conversation between the emperor and a certain judge of the *velum*, Leo Monasteriotes. When Isaakios returned from a 'successful' campaign against the Vlacho-Bulgarians in 1186, Monasteriotes criticises the emperor for having disregarded the provisions of Basil II's typikon for the monastery of Sosthenion, claiming that for this reason the Vlacho-Bulgarians had rebelled. In version a, Niketas adds that Isaakios dismissed the criticism, and ridiculed the great emperor by contending that while it took Basil a very long time to subdue the Bulgars, he, Isaakios, had crushed the rebellion almost instantly.¹⁴⁸

In another episode in version b, Isaakios is easily persuaded by his worthless advisors that Frederick Barbarossa, whose crusader army was at that time (1189) making its way through the Balkans, was in reality planning to attack Constantinople. In version a, Niketas portrays the infuriated Isaakios carrying sharpened arrows in his hands in order to 'pierce the hearts of the Germans', and jestfully pointing to a side door of the palace of Blachernai, from where the deadly arrows would be fired to crush the enemy.¹⁴⁹ These scenes of unmitigated boastfulness, whether factually accurate or not, serve to add an element of humiliation when contrasted with the defeats that Isaakios II was to suffer at the hands of the Vlacho-Bulgarians and the

¹⁴⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 357/47-366/1, 376/27-390/26. For the rebellion of Branas see Michael Choniates, I, pp. 246-48; Bachman, *Johannes Syropoulos*, pp. 59-62; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 81-82, 160-75.

¹⁴⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 434/25-35. For details on this highly successful campaign one must turn to Niketas' oration, written on the occasion of Isaakios' victory over Stephen Nemanja, *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 26-34.

¹⁴⁷ Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, p. 345, n. 88.

¹⁴⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 373/74-78 om. b. For this episode see Wolff, 'The Second Bulgarian Empire', p.183; Varzos, II, p. 820.; For Leo Monasteriotes and his career see Idem, I, pp. 555-56, 596, 597. For the provisions of Basil II the Bulgar-Slayer, see Malingoudis, *Nachrichten*, pp. 76-77; Pontani, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, pp. 711-712, n. 96.

¹⁴⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 404/7-13 om. b. For Isaakios II and Frederick Barbarossa in the Balkans see P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 294-300.

Germans. This was precisely the purpose of Niketas' additions.¹⁵⁰ He further mocks Isaakios' failures by reporting, again only in version a, the alleged playful repartee between the Vlach leaders, Peter and Asan. In an ironical jest, they suggest making Isaakios emperor of their own nation and pray that the Angelos dynasty would be granted a long reign, so that they may continue their successes unhindered! Niketas concludes this episode with his own sarcastic remark: 'I do not know whence or how they developed these carefully thought out ideas.'¹⁵¹

In all, it is clear that Niketas criticisms in version a had the aim of illustrating 'how' the foolish and reckless emperors mismanaged foreign policy. Whether the historian criticises Manuel Komnenos for his thoughtless trust in astrology, Andronikos I for his negligence or Isaakios II for his incompetence, he is always at pains to demonstrate the shortcomings of the emperors in the face of foreign aggression.

Character Portrayal

Niketas' focus on the actions and personalities of the leading men of the age was largely dictated by the historiographical tradition to which he belonged. The historian's task, as our author understood it, was very similar to the functions performed by a judge when passing sentence for criminal activities. In this sense, it is clear that the purpose of Niketas' history was entirely punitive. Intrinsic to this aim is the idea that the historian's obligation is to expose not only the 'deeds' but also the 'lives' of the main characters of the story. Indeed, according to the great historian of the Justinianic era, Procopius, 'what man of later times would have learned of the licentious life of Semiramis or the madness of Sardanapalus and of Nero, if the records of these things had not been left behind by the writers of their times?'¹⁵² Six centuries after this sentence was written down, Niketas could still offer the reader

¹⁵⁰ An interesting comparison could be made here with Niketas' own orations to Isaakios, where the emperor did not take pride in his victory over the Serbs: *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 31/11-12, οὐδ' ἐπῆρας τὴν θεόθεν νίκην εἰς ἔμπληκτον τοιόνδε γαυρίαμα. We could also draw a comparison with Isaakios' lack of military success in the *Historia* and the abundance of victorious epithets attached to the emperor in the orations. Characteristic are the following lines taken from one of Niketas' orations to Isaakios: p. 44/3: ὁ γίγας Ἰσαάκιος, ὁ τῶν ἐθνῶν διώκτης and later on 44/10: χαῖρε, χαῖρε, βασιλεῦ, φρικτέ βαρβαροκτόνε, and: p. 5/13: νικηκώτατε βασιλεῦ and 5/13: φιλοκινδυνότατε ὁμοῦ καὶ μεγαλοκινδυνότατε.

¹⁵¹ Nik.Chon., pp. 436/89-437/15.

¹⁵² Procopius, *The Anecdota or Secret History*, trans. H.B. Dewing, Loeb Classical library, 1935, p. 7.

brilliant examples of the same principle upheld throughout his own narrative. A case in point is his ingenious portrait of Manuel Komnenos.

The flaws of the emperor's character, so well known to modern scholars – his obsession with astrology and his sexual promiscuity – are merely alluded to in version b, whereas in the a-text they are brought to light with unparalleled intensity. For example, in the b-text, Niketas tells us that when Manuel was a young man, he engaged freely in a voluptuous life and wanton acts of pleasure. This is then excused on account of his age and passionate character.¹⁵³ Version a, however provides us with the additional information that the emperor was having an incestuous affair with one of his kinswomen and that as a result of this impropriety his countenance was blemished.¹⁵⁴ The scandalous affair is mentioned three more times in the a-text. In book III, Niketas tells us that Manuel had his cousin and later emperor Andronikos I imprisoned not only because he had conspired against him with the Hungarians, but also because he was conducting an illicit affair with his cousin's daughter, Eudokia, and this greatly displeased Manuel.¹⁵⁵ In the a-text, he adds that Andronikos responded to these allegations by accusing Manuel of the same illicit behaviour, and contending that the emperor's behaviour was even worse, since he engaged in sexual intercourse with his sister's daughter, while Andronikos had chosen his cousin's child.¹⁵⁶

The second reference mentions the mistress by name. Niketas tells us that Manuel's niece, Theodora, with whom the emperor was having an affair, received along with the sons she bore him, vast amounts of public revenues. The historian continues the narration by adding a lively characterisation of Theodora, who enjoyed such excessive privileges in court that the only thing she lacked was a crown!¹⁵⁷ Finally, in relating the plot hatched against Isaakios II Angelos by two scions of the Komnenoi dynasty in 1193/94, Niketas tells us in the b-text that these men were Andronikos, the grandson of Anna Komnene and a certain Alexios, the son of

¹⁵³ Nik. Chon., p. 54/62-70.

¹⁵⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 54/70-74 om. APb: καὶ πρὸς τὰς μίξεις ἀκάθεκτος ὢν καὶ πολλαῖς θηλυτέραις ἐπιθορνύμενος ἔλαθε καὶ δι' ὁμογνίου τρυμαλιᾶς ἀθεμίτως ἐμπερονῶν. καὶ ἦν ἐκείνῳ μόλυσμα τὸ πραχθέν, διαλωβοῦν καὶ καταχέον ἀπρέπειαν, ὅσα καὶ ὄψεως χαριέσσης ἐκφυεῖσά που τοῦ προσώπου ἀκροχόρδων ἢ ἀλφῶν ἐξανθήματα.

¹⁵⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 103/19ff.

¹⁵⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 104/29-36 om. Wb.

¹⁵⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 204/90-02 om. Wb

Theodora Komnene.¹⁵⁸ In the a-text, we learn that Alexios was the illegitimate son of Emperor Manuel – τῷ σκοτίῳ υἱῷ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Μανουήλ – and that in appearance, he resembled his father -πατρώζων τὴν ὄψιν ἀκριβῶς.¹⁵⁹

It is not surprising to find that Niketas is our only near contemporary source for this affair. Constantine Varzos pointed to a characteristic ‘mania to conceal Manuel’s incestuous relationship’ in the sources.¹⁶⁰ The Latin historian, William of Tyre presents Theodora as the niece of Emperor Manuel and mother of a certain Alexios.¹⁶¹ Theodore Skoutariotes, who largely follows version b of the Niketastext, does not mention Manuel’s affair, while he takes particular delight in exposing that of Andronikos I.¹⁶² It appears that Niketas had himself participated in the ‘conspiracy’ to conceal the incestuous affair, which was in all likelihood a well-known, but well-kept secret.¹⁶³ Writing at the court of Alexios III *Komnenos*, and at a time when the Komnenoi were the most powerful and influential family in the empire, it is understandable that he would shrink from revealing that ‘the most blessed among emperors’,¹⁶⁴ as the Byzantines themselves referred to him, was guilty of incest. After all, according to the traditional Byzantine *Kaiseridee*, an emperor should be the ‘master of his passions’, since his behaviour serves as a model to be emulated by his subjects.¹⁶⁵ Seen from within this context, the rebukes of Andronikos against Manuel assume great significance and it is clear that Niketas included them in the a-text so as to illustrate yet another way in which Manuel Komnenos fell short of the imperial ideal.

Niketas also utilises Manuel’s belief in astrology to denigrate his character. In version b, he sarcastically expresses bewilderment as to how the emperor, who was not at all unlearned or illiterate, could have such strong faith in astrology, prophecies

¹⁵⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 425/68-69 on Alexios: καὶ τὸν συνίστορα δὲ τούτῳ τῆς βασιλείας λεγόμενον Ἀλέξιον, τὸν τῆς Κομνηνῆς Θεοδώρας υἱὸν ἀποκείρει (=b). The information that Alexios was Manuel’s illegitimate son is, however, supplied in P: post υἱόν, ὃν ἐκ νοθείας ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐγένετο Μανουήλ. For Alexios see Varzos, II, pp. 481-96 esp. n. 5. For the conspiracy against Isaakios II Angelos see Idem, pp. 83-84.

¹⁵⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 425/59, 75-76 om. b

¹⁶⁰ Varzos, II, pp. 423-25.

¹⁶¹ William of Tyre, II, pp. 460-61.

¹⁶² Skoutariotes, p. 243.

¹⁶³ Despite the silence in the sources, it is likely that these affairs were widely known, given the official status of illegitimate children at the imperial court. The primary example is, of course, Alexios, son of Manuel and Theodora, who was given the highest ranks and titles of court, *sebastokrator* and *caesar*. See discussion in L. Garland, ‘Morality versus Politics at the Byzantine Court: The Charges against Marie of Antioch and Euphrosyne’, *BF* 24 (1997), pp. 259-71.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Choniates, I, p. 322/20-21: ὁ μακαριστότατος ἐν βασιλεῦσι Μανουήλ.

¹⁶⁵ See Synesios, p. 146; Theophylact of Ochrid, *Opera*, I, p. 193.

and various omens.¹⁶⁶ In version a, the historian exploits this belief to ridicule the emperor. In an episode that concerns the birth of Manuel's long-awaited heir, Alexios II, Niketas merely announces the birth of the male child in version b: 'From the emperor's second marriage a male child was born, and prayers of thanksgiving were offered to God and everyone applauded and rejoiced.'¹⁶⁷ In version a, the historian inserts a paragraph, which in effect re-enacts the birth scene. He portrays the emperor anxiously awaiting to see what the sex of the child would be and casting glances at the astrologer present. When a male child was born, the astrologer predicted that he would be greatly blessed, 'a child of destiny'. It is clear that Niketas added this information to illustrate the folly of Manuel's beliefs, since Alexios was to be murdered just three years after his father's death.¹⁶⁸

Niketas' sketch of Andronikos Komnenos, although embryonically formulated in version b, receives its full expression through the alterations and additions found in version a.¹⁶⁹ At times, Andronikos receives Niketas' bountiful praise because he attempted to enforce a series of political and social reforms. The historian polishes off his 'encomium' by referring to Andronikos' building activity in the capital, his affability toward his 'low-born' subjects, his aversion to dogmatic innovations and his love of philosophy.¹⁷⁰ On other occasions, however, the emperor is relentlessly criticized and condemned as a cruel and merciless tyrant.¹⁷¹ In fact,

¹⁶⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 146/36-41. Niketas is here referring to the AIMA prophecy: the prediction that the initial letters of the Komnenian emperors would spell the Greek word for blood. See C. Varzos, 'La politique dynastique des Comnènes et des Anges. La prediction AIMA et l'heritage des Grands Comnènes de Trebizond', *JÖB* 32/2 (1982), pp. 355-60; R. Shukurov, 'AIMA: The blood of the Grand Komnenoi', *BMGS* 19 (1995), pp. 161-81; Magadalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 220, 224.

¹⁶⁷ Nik.Chon., pp. 168/79-169/88 b: ἐκ δὲ γάμων τῶν δευτέρων τοῦ βασιλέως τοῦδε παῖδα γειναμένου ἄρρενα, θεῶ τε φωναὶ ἀπεδίδοντο χαριστήριοι καὶ ἅπας ἦν ἐν κρότοις καὶ χαρμοναῖς.

¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, Kinnamos, p. 257, presents the birth of a male child as a vindication for Manuel's stance in the doctrinal controversy of 1166 (See C. Mango, 'The Conciliar Edict of 1166', *DOP* 17(1963), pp. 317-30). For the dating of Alexios' birth see: P. Wirth, 'Wann wurde Kaiser Alexios II. Komnenos geboren?' *BZ* 49 (1956), pp. 65-67.

¹⁶⁹ On Andronikos' reign see: Cognasso, *Partiti politici*, pp. 86-133; P. Tivčev, 'Le regne de l'empereur de Byzance, Andronic Ier Comnène (1183-1185)', *BSI* 23 (1962), pp. 19-40; J. Danstrup, 'Recherches critiques sur Andronikos Ier', *Vetenskaps-Societen I Lund, Arsbok*, 1944, pp. 69-101; Jurewicz, *Andronikos I Komnenos*; Lilie, 'Des Kaisers Macht', p. 89ff; Christophilopoulou, *Βυζαντινὴ Ἱστορία*, pp. 160-81. For an assessment of Niketas' portrayal of Andronikos see: Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, pp. 174-77; Hunger, *Literatur*, I, p. 436ff; *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 31-75.

¹⁷⁰ Nik.Chon., pp. 325/14-331/11. These were the characteristics of an ideal ruler. See Theophylact of Ochrid, *Opera*, I, p. 199ff.

¹⁷¹ Nik.Chon., pp. 292/68ff., 310/61ff., 323/75ff. Niketas' assessment of Andronikos was largely shaped by the opinions of his sources, his brother Michael Choniates and Eustathios of Thessaloniki. Michael Choniates, I, pp. 218-19: In his speech to Isaakios II Angelos, the metropolitan portrays Andronikos as a monster in human form and one who takes delight in the smell of the burnt human flesh. As to the explanation for his cruelty, the metropolitan believed that Andronikos copied these

book I of the reign of Andronikos is dominated by a discussion of the emperor's cruel nature, his unlawful deeds and inhuman executions.¹⁷²

In the revision of the text it is only the evil side of the emperor, which Niketas chooses to emphasize and expose in greater detail. One way in which the historian creates this effect is not so much through sweeping alterations but through the use of harsher language. For example: 272/65 τὸ τοῦ βλέμματος [ὁ θῆρ om. b] μεταθέμενος βλοσυρὸν; 275/12 τῆς δὲ πράξεως [of Andronikos]: PWb τῆς δὲ μυσαρᾶς πράξεως: VA; 343/40 τὸν Ἀνδρόνικον: APWb τὸν κρεωβόρον Ἀνδρόνικον: V. Another is through the addition of critical commentary: 272/65-69 ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον τῶν πραγμάτων ἀλλοίωσιν πολλοῖς τῶν δεομένων καθυποσχόμενος. [ἦν δὲ ταῦτα φενάκη πρόδηλος καὶ ψευδὴς ἐπαγγελία τοῦ ἀπατεῶνος καὶ τὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἱλαρὸν φιλανθρωπίας παρυφιστάνον ἰσχύοντα ἰνδαλμα πρόσκαιρον συσκιάζον τὴν ἔνδοθεν ἀγριότητα om. b]; 273/90-91 ἄσας τὰ ἀναγορευτήρια ἐφ' ἕτερα τρέπει τὸν νοῦν [παρανομίας γέμοντα ἔργα om. b]; 292/69-71 μὴ ἔχων δ' ὅπως τὸν ἀπόντα ἐχθρὸν χειρώσεται, ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐγγὺς τρέπει τὸν θυμὸν [ταυτόν τι δρῶν, ὃ καὶ κύνες πολλάκις ποιεῖν εἰώθασι· τοῦ γὰρ βάλλοντος ἀφιστάμενοι τοῦτον μὲν ἀμύνουσιν ὑλακαῖς, τὸ δὲ ἀφεθέντι λίθῳ τοὺς ὀδόντας ἐγχρίπτουσιν om. Wb].

On other occasions, Niketas' additions attack the emperor at his weakest points. According to the historian, one of these was old age.¹⁷³ Andronikos' coronation offers a good example. The newly crowned emperor, upon leaving the holy temple did not ride slowly through the streets, as was customary, but proceeded at a fast pace. Niketas leaves it at that in version b. In a, he adds that many people speculated as to why he did this, some saying that he feared the crowd and others that because he was old, strain and fatigue from the day's festivities had caused him to

practices from the 'barbaric' nations he was forced to associate with during his exile. Niketas provides us with the same explanation: Nik.Chon., p. 312/2-4. See also Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 55 and Idem, *Opuscula*, p. 270. According to Eustathios, the emperor could be given the highest praise or the most severe blame depending on which side of his character was being looked at.

¹⁷² Nik.Chon., esp. pp. 266/16ff., 298/68ff., 309/20. Andronikos instigated the death penalty for the crime of high treason, appointing a panel of judges favourable to him, and later pretending to obey the decisions of the court. See discussion in K. Bourdara, 'Το ἐγκλημα καθοσιώσεως στην εποχή των Κομνηνών, 1081-1185', *Αφιέρωμα στον Νίκο Σβορώνο*, A', Rethymnon 1986, pp. 223-26.

¹⁷³ For the Byzantine attitude to old age see: A.M. Talbot, 'Old Age in Byzantium', *BZ* 72 (1984), pp. 267-78.

defecate himself.¹⁷⁴ It is blatantly obvious that Niketas' purpose in supplying this information was merely to humiliate the elderly emperor.

Yet the one emperor who is truly denigrated by Niketas is Isaakios II Angelos. In fact, the historian has been accused with 'conducting a campaign of systematic vilification' of Isaakios by placing emphasis on his sluggish personality and continually playing down his successes.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, Niketas' strong disapproval of Isaakios is apparent from the commencement of his narration of the reign, where he openly declares that the emperor had succeeded to the throne by purchasing it with the 'blood' of Stephanos Hagiochristophorites, clearly providing the reader with a prelude of what is to follow.¹⁷⁶ Although Niketas criticises Isaakios on policy issues, it is the emperor's weakness of character that he chooses to underline.

An excellent example is offered by Isaakios' relationship with Dositheos, intermittent patriarch of Constantinople during the year 1189. The emperor had attempted several times without success to install this individual (who had been titular patriarch of Jerusalem) to the patriarchal throne. In version b, we are told that Dositheos had a very close relationship with the gullible Isaakios because in the past he had predicted the latter's accession to the throne. When Dositheos was ousted from the patriarchate because of fierce opposition from within the church, Niketas adds the following information: 'then, as was reported everywhere, Dositheos selected images of future events from the books of Solomon and certain explanations of dreams sent by demons so that he pulled the emperor around not by his nose but by his ears.'¹⁷⁷ Later in the narrative, we find Isaakios suffering from delusions of

¹⁷⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 273/85-89 om. Wb.

¹⁷⁵ Brand, *Byzantium confronts the West*, p. 113; See also: E. McNeal, 'The Story of Isaac and Andronicus', *Speculum* 9 (1934), p.325: 'Nicetas ...is inspired with patriotic scorn and hatred for the Angeli and their hangers-on, who in his eyes were responsible for the fate that befell the empress of cities.' Herbert Hunger concedes that Niketas' 'objectivity' is less visible when it comes to his portrayal of Isaakios Angelos: *Literatur*, I, p. 437.

¹⁷⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 355/3-4. But see how differently this episode is presented in Niketas' orations: *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 39/9-10, 89/17-19. For a discussion of the difference between Isaakios' portrayal in the *Historia* and the orations see Macrides, 'From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi', pp. 277-79. For Stephanos Hagiochristophorites, one of Andronikos' most powerful ministers: A. Savvides, 'Θεμουργός Αντιχριστοφορίτης, ανήρ αιμάτων. Η τύχη του Στέφανου Αγιοχριστοφορίτη, κυρίου οργάνου του Ανδρονίκου Α' Κομνηνού', *Εγκλημα και Τιμωρία στο Βυζάντιο*, ed. S. Troianos, Athens 1996, pp. 69-95 and L. Garland, 'Stephen Hagiochristophorites: Logothetes tou Genikou 1182/3-1185', *Byz* 29 (1999), pp. 18-23.

¹⁷⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 408/87-90 om. Wb: τότε δ', ὡς ἀπανταχῇ περιήδετο, ἐκ Σολομωντείων βίβλων ἰνδάλματα τῶν ἐσομένων καὶ τινὰς ἐμφάσεις κατὰ τοὺς ὄνειρομποῦς δαίμονας ἀποτρυγῶν ὁ Δοσίθεος οὐχ ὥσπερ ἀπὸ ῥινός, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν ὠτων εἴλκε τὸν αὐτοκράτορα. For the entire affair see V. Grumel, *Le Περὶ Μεταθέσεων et le Patriarche de Constantinople Dosithée*, *Études Byzantines*, I (1943), pp. 239-49; K. G. Pitsakis, 'Η ἑκταση εξουσίας ενός υπερόριου πατριάρχη Αντιόχειας στην Κωνσταντινούπολη τον 12^ο αι.', in *Byzantium in the Twelfth Century*.

grandeur, imagining that one day he would be sole ruler of the world. Niketas informs us that Dositheos was responsible for leading the foolish emperor astray with such fantastic predictions. He then paints a picture of Dositheos soothing Isaakios' anxieties 'in the manner that wet-nurses place newborn babies on their stomachs in order to calm them', and assuring him that like Timothy, Fortune would hand over conquered cities to him while he lay asleep (an allusion to Aelian, *Varia Historia*, 13.43).¹⁷⁸

This weakness of character is once again highlighted in Isaakios' dealings with his chief ministers, Theodore Kastamonites, *logothetes ton sekreton* and Constantine Mesopotamites, *epi tou kanikleiou*.¹⁷⁹ In version b, Isaakios easily succumbs to the influence of these two figures. In version a, this idea is developed to the point where these individuals virtually assume the reins of power (437/20-23):

<p>[Isaakios] transferred the bridles and reins of the administration of public affairs to many, finally giving the management and direction of these things to his maternal uncle, Theodore Kastamonites (=b)¹⁸⁰</p>	<p>[Isaakios] transferred the bridles and reins of the emperorship to many so that he might avoid the great responsibility of governing the state, finally giving the management and direction of <i>all</i> things to his maternal uncle, Theodore Kastamonites (=V)</p>
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After the death of Kastamonites in the early 1190's, the young Constantine Mesopotamites 'assumed the administration of affairs'. At first Niketas refuses to disclose his name, but describes him in terms such as 'παιδίον μικρόν' and 'παιδιογέρων'.¹⁸¹ In version b, the historian quite openly ridicules the emperor's dependence on this young boy by portraying Isaakios as an elephant being led around by the 'ant-man', Mesopotamites, and then as a camel being dragged along by a mere string, again Mesopotamites.¹⁸² In version a, he inserts a host of unflattering information concerning this individual and tells us that the reason why he was so

Canon Law, State and Society, ed. N. Oikonomides, Athens 1991, pp. 91-139, esp. 98-99; Pontani, *Commentary to: Narrazione cronologica*, II, pp. 741-744, nos. 67-95.

¹⁷⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 432/78-88 om. b. See *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 94/11-18: Niketas wishes Isaakios a successful expansion of the empire to the Tigris-Euphrates!

¹⁷⁹ For the role of these individuals in the administration of Isaakios see Michael Choniates, II, p. 70; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 98-99; Varzos, II, pp. 810, 813.

¹⁸⁰ οὐκοῦν πολλοῖς τὰ χαλινὰ καὶ τὰ ἡνίας ὑπαλλάξας τῆς τῶν κοινῶν διοικήσεως, φέρων ἐνεχείρισε τὴν τούτων διεξαγωγὴν καὶ κυβέρνησιν καὶ τῷ πρὸς μητρὸς θείῳ Θεοδώρῳ τῷ Κασταμονίτῃ.

¹⁸¹ For these terms see Pontani, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, II, p. 773, n. 114.

¹⁸² Nik.Chon., pp. 439/72-73, 440/82-83.

favoured by the emperor was that he had an aptitude for trade as well as ‘the gathering of unjust gain.’¹⁸³

In the section where Niketas finally comes round to describing the character of the emperor himself, we find the most carefully planned and elaborate revision. The theme of Isaakios’ prodigality appears first.¹⁸⁴ In the b-text Niketas tells us that Isaakios was fond of sumptuous feasts and banquets. Moreover, his personal appearance was of the outmost importance to him: he bathed on alternate days and sprinkled himself with fine perfumes. The historian goes on to mock the emperor by likening his appearance and extravagance of dress to that of a peacock, and tells us that when Isaakios left the palace, he looked like a bridegroom leaving the bridal chamber!¹⁸⁵ Niketas’ choice to describe Isaakios as a ‘peacock’ and a ‘bridegroom’ was not coincidental, for they were typical characterisations of a weak and effeminate ruler.¹⁸⁶ This is precisely the image that Niketas wished to get across. The author then expands and enriches this section along the same lines, with the difference that he adds the following introductory note: ‘the actions of the emperor during the time he stayed in the queen of cities, to speak in brief, can be described as such...’¹⁸⁷ Thus what in the b-text is merely an abstract depiction of extravagance, in the a-text turns into a charge of worthlessness and indolence, as the reader is left with the distinct impression that Isaakios did little else. This is then further developed in the paragraph immediately following (441/18-442/32 om. b):

Because [Isaakios] took pleasure in ribaldries and was captivated by the gentleness of the Muse’s songs and mingled with laughter-stirring dwarfs, he did not close the palace to knaves, mimes, parasites and minstrels. But along with these comes drunken revel followed by licentious acts and all those things that corrupt the functional and healthy state of the empire. During a dinner, [Isaakios] once said, ‘bring me salt (ἄλλας)’. Standing nearby was the wittiest of the mimes of those days, surnamed Chalivoures, who was admiring a group of women, made up of the emperor’s concubines and relatives, dancing. He replied, ‘Let us first know these and then we can order others (ἄλλας) to be brought in’. Upon hearing these words every man and woman burst into laughter. The emperor turned pale and only after he had chastened the jester for his freedom of speech, did his anger subside. Pursuing the pleasures

¹⁸³ Nik.Chon., p. 440/85- 441/9 om. b.

¹⁸⁴ On Isaakios’ prodigality see Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, p. 162.

¹⁸⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 441/9-17.

¹⁸⁶ See Synesios, p. 120; Theophylact of Ochrid, *Opera*, I, p. 193.

¹⁸⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 441/7-9 om. b: τὰ δ’ ἐφ’ ὅσον ἐνεδήμει χρόνον τῇ βασιλίδι τῶν πόλεων ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τούτου πραττόμενα, ὡς ἐκ πολλῶν ὀλίγα εἰπεῖν, οὕτωςι πως διετετράνωτο.

of season and location in other districts, he returned to the megalopolis at intervals and was seen only from time to time, like the bird called Phoenix.¹⁸⁸

Here the prodigality and vanity of Isaakios have become harmful to the empire.¹⁸⁹ This goes far beyond the Isaakios who was merely a touch extravagant in his choice of food and clothing, as he is portrayed in version b. Niketas, moreover, ventures a bit further in depicting an extraordinary everyday scene within the imperial palace swarming with drunks and prostitutes; an indecent state of affairs in which the emperor himself has become the joke of his own court buffoons. These themes were not, of course, chosen at random, nor do they apply to Isaakios Angelos alone. A century before Niketas, Theophylact of Ochrid had warned of the dangers of such inappropriate behaviour on the part of an emperor.¹⁹⁰

Continuing with this theme of extravagance, Niketas tells us that Isaakios erected massive buildings along the Propontis and extended the land out to the sea. He built splendid baths and apartments within both palaces.¹⁹¹ In the a-text, this building programme, much like Isaakios' extravagance of lifestyle is distorted into something entirely negative. Indeed, the historian adds that Isaakios tore down old churches in the eastern district that had been neglected in order to raise a tower to defend the palace of Blachernai,¹⁹² 'or so he said', and desolated the majority of the city's celebrated dwellings, including the *genikon* (treasury) and the renowned Mangana.¹⁹³ The emperor's zealous restoration of the church of Archangel Michael is

¹⁸⁸ χαίρων δὲ ταῖς εὐτραπέλαις καὶ τοῖς ἐκ τῆς ἀπαλῆς Μούσης ἄσμασιν ἀλίσκόμενος ἐγερσιγέλως τε ἀνθρωπίσκοις συμπαραφύρων οὐκ ἐπεζύγου κέρκωψί τε καὶ μίμοις καὶ παρασίτοις καὶ ἀοιδοῖς τὰ βασίλεια. τοῖς δὲ τοιούτοις ὁ πάροινος κῶμος συνέζευκται πάντως καὶ ἡ κατὰ τὰς κοίτας ἀσέλγεια συνεφέπεται καὶ ὅσα χρηστῆς καὶ ὑγιοῦς βασιλείας συνδιαφθείρει κατάστασιν. ἀτὰρ εἰρηκὲ ποτε ἐπὶ δείπνου 'ἐνέγκατέ μοι ἄλας', παρεστῶς δὲ τῶν τότε μίμων ὁ χαριέστατος, ὃ τὸ ἐπώνυμον Χαλιβούρης, περιβλεψάμενος τὸν τῶν γυναικῶν χορὸν ἐκ παλλακῶν καὶ συγγενῶν τοῦ βασιλέως κεκροτημένον 'γνωσόμεθα' εἶπε 'πρώτως ταύτας, ὃ βασιλεῦ· εἴθ' οὕτως ἄλλας εἰσενεχθῆναι κελεύσον.' καὶ πρὸς τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο πᾶσαι τε καὶ πάντες ἐξεκάγχασαν· τῷ δὲ τρέπεται ὁ χρῶς καὶ μόλις τὸν θυμὸν ἐν πείσει κολάσας ἐμβριμήματι τὴν τοῦ γελωτοποιοῦ ἐλευθεροστομίαν ἀνέστειλε. μεταδιώκων δὲ τὰ τῶν χωρίων εὖ ἔχοντα καὶ ὥρας καὶ θέσεως ἐκ διαλειμμάτων τὴν μεγαλόπολιν ἐπανήρχετο καὶ κατὰ περιόδους ὡς ὄρνις ὁ Φοῖνιξ ἐπωπτάνετο.

¹⁸⁹ For an analysis of the anecdote see L. Garland, 'And his Bald Head Shone like a Full Moon...': an appreciation of the Byzantine sense of humour as recorded in historical sources of the eleventh and twelfth centuries', *Parergon* 8 (1990), 9-10.

¹⁹⁰ Theophylact of Ochrid, *Opera*, I, pp. 207-08.

¹⁹¹ Nik.Chon., p. 442/33-38.

¹⁹² This tower still stands today and the inscription of Isaakios II Angelos has been preserved. For the importance that Blachernai assumed during the age of Komnenoi see P. Magdalino, *Constantinople médiévale. Études sur l'évolution des structures urbaines*, (TM Monographies, 9), Paris 1996, pp. 68-76.

¹⁹³ Nik.Chon., p. 442/38-47 om. b.

given a more or less neutral description in version b, although Niketas does say that Isaakios stole the holy icon of Christ from Monemvasia and transported it to Constantinople to adorn his own church.¹⁹⁴

In version a, Niketas develops this theme of ‘transportation’ to the extent that he charges Isaakios with the grave offence of sacrilege. He tells us that the emperor carried off the doors at Chalke, simply stripped bare the church of the *Nea* in the Great Palace and transported its sacred furniture and vessels to the Church of the Archangel Michael.¹⁹⁵ ‘For he thought’, says Niketas, ‘that removal was the same as augmentation and transportation the same as addition...and that God would not be angry, but pleased.’¹⁹⁶ The historian then continues: ‘[Isaakios] had the audacity, to put it mildly, to defile the holy vessels which he had removed from the churches and use them at his own table.’ He made necklaces and collars from the adornments of holy crosses and fastened these to his imperial robes. To those who dared to censure his behaviour, Isaakios became angry and charged them with stupidity, for they did not know ‘that all things are permissible to emperors’, since the separation of God and emperor was not total or absolute.¹⁹⁷ Niketas knew better, and easily made the connection between despoiling the church and the accusation of sacrilege.¹⁹⁸

The conclusion to be drawn from the examples we have offered here is that when Niketas discusses the personalities of his leading characters, his aim was full exposure and denigration. This type of reporting was certainly denied to him at the time he was composing the original version, but by the second decade of the thirteenth century, he had the both the opportunity and the grounds to disclose the ‘shameful’ conduct of the emperors. The worse the emperors came across, the easier it was for Niketas to explain the collapse of the empire.

¹⁹⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 442/48-443/59. For Isaakios’ building program see discussions in C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972, pp. 236-37; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 103-04; Varzos, II, pp. 833-34; Tinnefeld, *Kaiserkritik*, p. 172. For the removal of the icon from Monemvasia see N. A. Bees, ‘Ελκόμενος Χριστὸς τῆς Μονεμβασίας μετὰ παρεκβάσεων περὶ αὐτόθι Παναγίας τῆς Χρυσοφιτίσσης’, *BNJ* 10 (1932-34), pp. 207-62.

¹⁹⁵ For this church see P. Magdalino, ‘Observations on the Nea Ekklesia of Basil I’, *JÖB* 37 (1987), pp. 51-64.

¹⁹⁶ Nik.Chon., 443/59ff. om. b.

¹⁹⁷ Nik.Chon., p.443/72-444/2 om. b. For this idea see D. Simon, ‘Priceps legibus solutus. Die Stellung des byzantinischen Kaisers zum Gesetz’, in *Gedächtnisschrift für Wolfgang Kunkel*, (eds.) D. Nörr & D. Simon, Frankfurt 1984, pp. 449-92.

¹⁹⁸ Similar charges were levelled against Alexios I Komnenos. See (ed.) Gautier, ‘Diatribes de Jean l’Oxite’, pp. 31-33.

The Komnenian Image

The prestige of the epithet Komnenos together with the evocative force it carried is apparent in a number of narrative sources from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, where being a descendant of the Komnenian emperors was seen as an important advantage for the holder of the throne.¹⁹⁹ When Niketas was composing the original text – that is more or less within a generation after the death of Manuel I Komnenos – this emperor still enjoyed an illustrious reputation among Byzantines and foreign peoples.²⁰⁰ It is not coincidental that our author felt obliged to pay tribute to Manuel in his orations to both Isaakios II and Alexios III.²⁰¹ However, while Isaakios II Angelos was celebrated mostly in terms of his remarkable accession to the throne and the symbolic potential of the name Angelos, contemporary orators, including Niketas, stressed the blood ties between Alexios III and the Komnenoi.²⁰² The reason for this, as Niketas himself reveals in version a, was that Alexios changed his surname from Angelos to Komnenos either to associate himself with the more prestigious name of the Komnenoi, or in a conscious attempt to extinguish all traces of the name Angelos, a sort of *damnatio memoriae*.²⁰³

For our purposes, it is significant to note the connection made between the Komnenoi and Alexios III. Niketas emphasizes the familial ties of this emperor to the Komnenoi,²⁰⁴ and goes so far as to claim that Alexios had stood by the side of the young sovereign Alexios II ‘as Hercules had to Theseus’ and protected him from the evil clutches of the usurper Andronikos!²⁰⁵ Michael Choniates presents Alexios as the third Alexios to be emperor from the Komnenian line and stress his role as the protector of Komnenian rights to the Byzantine throne against all other rivals in

¹⁹⁹ Macrides, ‘Megas Komnenos’, p. 242-43.

²⁰⁰ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 3.

²⁰¹ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 40/22-23: μέγας αὐτοκράτωρ ἐκεῖνος, ὁ μᾶλλον διὰ τὸ ἀριστοπραξιῶν μέγεθος ἢ τὴν κλησιν τὸ θεῶνυμον κληρωσάμενος.

²⁰² Macrides, ‘From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi’, p. 279.

²⁰³ Nik.Chon. p. 459/54-56. Emperors, who in the past had assumed the reins of power by force, for example John Tzimiskes, had attempted to erase all official traces of their predecessors. See discussion in K. Bourdara, ‘Quelques cas de *damnatio memoriae* à l’époque de la dynastie macédonienne (867-1056), *Résumés des communications du XVI congrès international d’études byzantines*, JÖB 32/33 (1982), pp. 337-46.

²⁰⁴ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 40/21: ὁ γὰρ ἐκ γένους σοι προσήκων, p. 57/9: ὁ πρὸς πατρός σοι θεῖος.

²⁰⁵ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 58/12-14: ἀλλ’ ἐπαμύνων βασιλεῖ προσγενεῖ ὡς τῷ Θησεῖ Ἡρακλῆς ὅσα καὶ εἰς ᾄδου στόμιον εὐρυχανδὲς τὴν Ἀνδρονίκου γένυν κατασυρέντι καὶ παθόντι τὰ οἰκίστα.

power.²⁰⁶ Seen from within this context, it is understandable why Niketas who was writing at the court of ‘the third Alexios Komnenos’, was obligated, not to say coerced, to protect the honour and dignity of the imperial family, which as we shall see included not only the emperors themselves, but also their relatives, and indeed all those who carried the celebrated name.

A case in point is the usurper Andronikos I Komnenos. The most striking omissions in Niketas’ discussion of the reign in the b-text concern the murders of Maria, daughter of Manuel Komnenos, and her husband Renier-John of Montferrat (1183),²⁰⁷ along with that of the young sovereign Alexios II (1183).²⁰⁸ Concerning the deaths of Maria and Renier, a comparison of the two texts is most revealing (259/37-260/50):

After a few days had passed the daughter of Emperor Manuel, Maria the *kaisarissa*, departed the land of the living, having been poisoned, and as was rumoured the drug was not one that brought immediate death, but one that slowly drained life unhurriedly. Not long after, her husband, the caesar, followed. As was said, he did not die a natural death either, but one wine cup that terminated life was ordained to utterly destroy the eminent borne (=b).²⁰⁹

When he [Andronikos] had established his tyranny, it was not noticed at first that he was a deadly poisoner. After a few days had passed, it was said by everyone (if it is true, I do not know: add. APW) that he was an expert in mixing lethal potions and the first to take the fatal descent to Hades was the *kaisarissa* Maria, Emperor Manuel’s daughter, who more than anyone had desired to see Andronikos’ return to his country. By expedient promises he corrupted a certain eunuch named

²⁰⁶ Michael Choniates, I, p. 318/1-4, and Lampros’ comments, II, p. 525. In the thirteenth century, the ruler of the separatist state of Epiros, Theodore Komnenos Angelos Doukas never used the surname Angelos on coins or on his signature, but preferred that of Komnenos or Doukas. Similarly, Theodore I Laskaris, founder of the empire of Nicaea is called Komnenos on documents and coins after 1204. And of course, the rulers of Trebizond, descendants of Andronikos I Komnenos would be referred to as ‘Grand Komnenoi.’ See Macrides, ‘Megas Komnenos’, pp. 243, 244, n. 1.

²⁰⁷ The exact date of the murders cannot be established. According to Jurewic, *Andronikos I Komnenos*, p. 134, they occurred in July 1183, while Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 327-28, places them before the expulsion of Maria-Xene from the palace and the ensuing conspiracy of the Angeloi, which happened at a date no later than the spring of 1183.

²⁰⁸ For Andronikos’ motivation see Lilie, ‘Des Kaisers Macht’, pp. 93.

²⁰⁹ ἡμερῶν δὲ τινῶν διαλειπουσῶν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γίνεται ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως Μανουὴλ θυγάτηρ Μαρία ἡ καισάρισα φαρμάκῳ διαφθαρεῖσα, ὡς ἤδετο, εἶναι δὲ τὸ δηλητήριον οὐ τῶν αὐτίκα θανατούντων, ἀλλὰ τῶν κατὰ βραχὺ παρατιθεμένων θανάτῳ καὶ ὑπεξαγόντων τοῦ ζῆν σχολαιότερον. οὐ πολὺς ὁ ἐν μέσῳ καιρὸς καὶ τῷ δ’ αὐτῆς μόρῳ καὶ ὁ ταύτῃ σύζυγος καῖσαρ ἐπηκολούθησε. πλὴν οὐδ’ οὗτος φυσικῶς ἐλέγετο τελευτᾶν, ἀλλὰ κύλιξ ἐτεκμαίρετο μία ζωῆς κατευνάστρια δύο ἀμαυρῶσαι τέκνα πύοτος. For a philological commentary of this passage see Pontani, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, II, p. 598, n. 236. For poisoning in Byzantium see: I. Laskaratos, *Κύλικες ζωῆς κατευνάστριαι. Ιστορική και ιατρική προσέγγιση στις δηλητηριάσεις της βυζαντινῆς περιόδου*, Athens 1994, esp. pp. 256-63.

Pterygonites, who was in the service of Manuel before he attended Maria. Andronikos ordered him to pour the drug into her cup. It was not one that brought immediate death, but one that slowly drained life unhurriedly. Not long after, the woman's husband followed and as was said, he did not die a natural death either. Andronikos was dubbed a man-slayer by everyone and one wine cup that terminated life was ordained to utterly destroy the eminent borne (=VA).

The discrepancy between the two versions lies not so much in 'what' happened, for it is clear that Maria and her husband were murdered, but 'how' it happened. We may justifiably wonder why Niketas should have concealed the culpability of Andronikos in the b-text. It is significant to note that as the process of revision progressed he became more forthright: in APW he expresses doubt as to whether these rumours were true, which is then removed in V.²¹⁰ It is likely that the historian did not have first-hand knowledge of these events and that he had indeed heard the rumours bruited about in Constantinople. It is almost certain that he himself believed these rumours to be true, considering Andronikos' overall stance towards his rivals, and particularly those within the Komnenian family. But it is less clear why he did not implicate Andronikos in version b, and conversely why he did so subsequently.

Niketas' version of events concerning the role of Andronikos in the assassination of the young Alexios II is even more perplexing, when we consider that Eustathios of Thessaloniki openly names Andronikos as the murderer.²¹¹ Although Niketas tells us that Andronikos wished to dispose of Alexios – ἐκποδῶν γὰρ θέσθαι τὸν βασιλέα βουλευθεὶς Ἀλέξιον – he tells us that the ultimate decision was taken by an assembly, which by official judgment passed a death sentence on the

²¹⁰ Since Niketas is our only source for the murders of Maria the *kaisarissa* and Renier-John, most historians have taken him at his word. Besides, it is hardly plausible that these two important members of the imperial family simply vanished from the historical scene, especially when they represented such a serious threat to Andronikos.

²¹¹ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 53.

emperor.²¹² The names of the murderers of the young Alexios, Stephanos Hagiochristophorites, Constantine Tripsychos and Theodore Dadibrenos, are passed over in silence in the b-text.²¹³ In the a-text, Niketas not only gives us the names of the murderers, but also tells us that they were all close collaborators of Andronikos.²¹⁴

That the historian displayed a certain degree of hesitation in outright naming Andronikos as the murderer can be demonstrated by two more omissions in the b-text. During his coronation, Andronikos proclaimed that the only reason he wanted to rule was to assist the young Alexios – the one whom he strangled a few days later and cast into the bottom of the sea – or so the addition goes in VAPW.²¹⁵ Later in the text, we find Alexios III attempting to persuade the people of Melangeia that the rebel who had assumed the name of Alexios could not be the son of Manuel Komnenos because the real Alexios was put to death by Andronikos long ago. This is nowhere mentioned in version b.²¹⁶ But why would Niketas play down the role of the publicly-proclaimed tyrant Andronikos in the murder of the legitimate heir to the throne in version b?

First of all, it seems that public reaction to these events was rather limited, if there was any at all. Our contemporary sources do not devote much space to them, and Michael Choniates goes so far as to almost condone Andronikos' actions in his speech to the *praetor* Drimys (appointed to Hellas by the same emperor).²¹⁷ Niketas' own depictions of Maria and Alexios are far from positive: Alexios is portrayed as a weak, frivolous, and ignorant child,²¹⁸ while Maria comes across as an aggressive and reckless woman, who was obsessively jealous of her step-mother.²¹⁹ Finally, Eustathios expresses grief at the murder of Alexios, but adds that Andronikos could have redeemed himself had he stopped with the murder of the emperor!²²⁰ At the time Niketas was writing the original version in the late 1190s/early 1200s almost twenty years had passed from these events, yet he is still relatively silent. Moreover, the mere

²¹² Nik.Chon., p. 273/92-10.

²¹³ Nik.Chon., p. 273/13-14 om. b.

²¹⁴ Constantine Tripsychos and Theodore Dadibrenos will be discussed later on. The assassination of Alexios II is also mentioned in book 27 of the *Panoplia Dogmatike*, (ed. Eustratiades), p. κα' For the date (before 10/14 September 1183) see E. Kislinger, 'Zur Chronologie der byzantinischen Thronweschel 1180-1185', *JÖB* 1997, p. 197.

²¹⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 272/78-79 om. b.

²¹⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 462/51-53 om. b. This was Pseudo-Alexios IV, considered the most dangerous of all, who appeared in the region of Cilicia in July 1195. See Varzos, II, pp. 476-80.

²¹⁷ Michael Choniates, I, p. 163 and Lampros' comments, II, p. 462. The metropolitan's attitude to the murder of Alexios II is rather different in the *Monodia* written for his brother, I, p. 349.

²¹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 223/5-14.

²¹⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 223/32-46, 230/93-3, 241/72-77.

²²⁰ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 53.

existence of four rebels in Asia Minor who took the name of Alexios II Komnenos reveals a certain ambiguity on the part of the Byzantines concerning the young emperor's fate.²²¹

Niketas himself unconsciously gives us a glimpse into the delicate nature of the situation. While narrating the rebellion of a certain Pseudo-Alexios,²²² he tells us that when the news arrived in Constantinople that the rebel had acquired great fame in the cities along the Meander, 'those who frequented the imperial court and knew very well that Alexios, the son of Emperor Manuel had long ago departed this life, marvelled at these events, for they knew the facts.'²²³ It begins to appear as if silence was the official policy concerning the imperial family's murderous secrets, or as we saw earlier its incestuous affairs. As a member of the government, Niketas behaved and wrote accordingly. Andronikos may have been a usurper, but he was also a *Komnenos*.

The case of Alexios Komnenos, *protosebastos* and *protovestiarios*,²²⁴ the effective ruler of the state during the regency of the empress-mother Maria-Xene (1180-82), is an even more characteristic example of this attitude. Niketas' stance to this individual in the b-text is mostly one of indifference. The historian either overlooks or more likely, purposely plays down the role of Alexios in those troubled years following the death of Manuel I Komnenos. The *protosebastos* is merely presented as one more ambitious scion of the Komnenian family who had usurped power and as a result stood as chief adversary to other members of the great family, namely Maria the *kaisarissa* and Andronikos Komnenos, who in turn were attempting to seize the emperorship for themselves.²²⁵

All three are, to a lesser or greater extent, criticised on the same basis – for formulating a civil war because of their personal ambitions – while the whole episode

²²¹ See Varzos, II, pp. 471-80; A. Savvides, *Βυζαντινά Στασιαστικά και Αυτονομιστικά Κινήματα στα Δωδεκάνησα και στη Μικρά Ασία, 1189- c. 1249 μ.Χ.* Athens 1987, pp. 196-212.

²²² This was Pseudo-Alexios II, who rebelled in 1091. See Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 123-24; Varzos, II, 473-76.

²²³ *Historia*, 421/61-65: ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς κατὰ τὴν βασιλείου αὐλὴν διατρίβουσι καὶ εἰδόσι μάλα ἐπισταμένως ὡς Ἀλέξιος ὁ τοῦ βασιλέως παῖς Μανουὴλ πάλαι τὸν βίον ἀπολέλοιπε τὸν ἀνθρώπινον εἰς θαῦμα ἐτίθετο, γινώσκουσι μὲν τὰ ὄντα.

²²⁴ For Alexios see Varzos, II, pp. 189-218.

²²⁵ For the arrangements of the regency regime see: I. Medvedev, 'Η συνοδική απόφαση της 24 Μαρτίου 1171 ως νόμος για την διαδοχή στο Βυζάντιο', in *Byzantium in the Twelfth Century*, pp. 234-36.

is largely viewed as a Komnenian struggle for power.²²⁶ What is of particular importance for us is that the role of Alexios in version b is more or less inconsequential, especially when compared to that of the anti-hero of these events, Andronikos, or even the unscrupulous Maria the *kaisarissa*. In the a-text, however, Alexios is singled out as the villain of the whole affair and comes under attack by the historian. Niketas first criticises Alexios on a personal level by exposing the rumour of his alleged sexual affair with the empress (224/33-36):

<p>The <i>protosebastos</i> and <i>protovestiaros</i> Alexios Komnenos, who was a nephew of emperor Manuel on his father's side, <i>underhandedly won over the emperor's mother</i>. (=APWb).²²⁷</p>	<p>The <i>protosebastos</i> and <i>protovestiaros</i>, Alexios Komnenos, who was a nephew of the emperor Manuel on his father's side, <i>had sexual relations with the emperor's mother, as was said</i>. (=V).²²⁸</p>
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The situation was viewed with a jaundiced eye by all those who feared that the *protosebastos* might depose the young Alexios and rule in his place. Niketas, however, stresses that those who objected the most to the *protosebastos*' unlawful regime were the 'blood relatives' of the young emperor, who had been made equal in power by Manuel Komnenos and were anxious lest their privileges and dignities be taken from them.²²⁹ He thus continues (225/42-46):

<p>For the rumour was already bruited about and shouted explicitly that Alexios was almost united to the emperor's mother and in accord with her, and that he had in mind to overthrow the emperor, planning to mount the throne himself (=APb).²³⁰</p>	<p>For the rumour was already bruited about and shouted explicitly that Alexios was having sexual relations with the emperor's mother, and that he had in mind to overthrow the emperor, planning to mount both mother and throne himself (=V).</p>
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²²⁶ For these events see: Cognasso, 'Partiti politici', pp. 213-29; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 31-41; Varzos, I, pp. 542-47 and II, pp. 203-18; Lilie, 'Des Kaisers Macht', p. 85ff; Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 224-25; Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, pp. 295-96.

²²⁷ τὴν τοῦ παιδὸς καὶ βασιλέως μητέρα ὑποποιησάμενον.

²²⁸ τῇ τοῦ παιδὸς καὶ βασιλέως μητρὶ πλησιάζοντος, ὡς ἐλέγετο.

²²⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 224/36-225/41. For the factions at court see discussions in Cognasso, 'Partiti politici', pp. 213-29; Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 217-27.

²³⁰ ἤδη γὰρ ἡ φήμη λόλος ἦν καὶ διαρρήδην κραυγάζουσα ὡς Ἀλέξιος τῇ μητρὶ τοῦ βασιλέως ξύμφυτος μικροῦ καὶ σύμπνους γενόμενος καὶ καθελεῖν μὲν αὐτὸν τῆς βασιλείας ἐν νῶ τίθεται, ἑαυτὸν δ' ἐπιβήτορα ταύτης, θέσθαι σκέπτεται.

It is clear from the above quoted passages that although Niketas is alluding to the affair between Maria-Xene and Alexios in version b, he never states this outright. Only in the final version (=V) are the rumours of the sexual affair made explicit. The alleged affair is also mentioned by Eustathios, who claims that Maria-Xene had many lovers and that Alexios succeeded in outstripping his rivals for her affection with the ultimate aim of winning the throne.²³¹ William of Tyre, obviously drawing on Byzantine accounts, also relates the rumours concerning the liaison between the empress and Alexios.²³²

Having related openly the illicit affair, Niketas continues the revision of his discussion of Alexios by adding a series of damaging character depictions of the *protosebastos* in version a. Let us look at three examples. The first describes Alexios' general behaviour (229/67-70):

The protosebastos Alexios, for whom power was second nature and who had great influence over the empress, was at variance with the majority of his blood relatives and consequently forced the administration of the state into his own hands (=b).²³³

The protosebastos Alexios became exceedingly furious, relying on his own power and his great influence over the empress, he was like a serpent who had been fed on many evil herbs and was terrible to look at (=V).

In another instance Niketas tells us that Alexios wished to depose the patriarch Theodosios Boradiotes (1178-83) because he had given asylum to Maria the *kaisarissa* and her supporters when she revolted (1181), but failed in his resolution because he could not find justification and because the empress along with most of her relatives opposed the action. He then added the following in the a-text (242/16-18 om. b): 'So, against his will, the crooked serpent ceased his spiral movements and swallowed again the venom which he had prepared to vomit all over the saint.'²³⁴

²³¹ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 20-22.

²³² William of Tyre, II, p. 462. It should be noted that unlike Niketas, our other sources emphasise the alleged affair as well as the pro-Latin policies of the regency regime. See Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 31, 35; Michael Choniates, I, pp. 163-64. Modern historians have rejected this analysis, recognising that these accusations were mostly levelled against Alexios and Maria by political foes for the purposes of propaganda. See discussions in: Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 224-25; Garland, 'Morality versus Politics', pp. 272-86.

²³³ ὁ δὲ πρωτοσεβαστὸς Ἀλέξιος τῷ ἰδίῳ φυσιοῦμενος κράτει καὶ τῇ παραδυναστείᾳ τῆς δεσποίνης καταχρῶμενος, διαστασιάζοντας εἶχε τῶν ἐξ αἵματος ἐκείνῳ πλείστους καὶ μάλιστα ὅτι τὴν ὅλων διοίκησιν ἐς ἑαυτὸν ἐβιάζετο.

²³⁴ ἄκων οὖν ὁ σκολιδὸς ὄφεις τῶν ἐλίξεων ἀποστὰς καὶ τὸν ἰόν αὐθις κατεσπακῶς, ὃν ἐμημεκέναι κατὰ τοῦ ἀγίου προητοιμάκει.

Even more damaging is his next description, again added in the a-text (244/48-59 om.Wb). Alexios, claims Niketas, was an effeminate dullard (γύνανδρος καὶ ὑπόνωθρος) who wasted most of his day sleeping. He despised sunlight and thus darkened his bedroom with thick purple curtains, 'making the darkness his secret place' (ἀποκρυβὴν ἑαυτοῦ τὸ σκότος τιθέμενος), and 'revelling in the deeds of the night' (τὰ μὲν νυκτὸς ἔργα τρυφῶν).²³⁵ Finally, the historian provides us an overall evaluation of the situation once Andronikos had succeeded in removing Alexios from power (250/10-14):

He [Alexios] had hands able to give battle and fingers trained for war. Had he perhaps been better prepared for war and utilised greater might, he could have barred Andronikos' entry into the city and thus protected himself from the evil of that time (=b).²³⁶

Had he [Alexios] had hands able to give battle and fingers trained for war, and had he not been a weak warrior and stammerer who spent half the day snoring, he could have barred Andronikos' entry into the city and thus protected himself from the evil of that time (=V).

It is of interest to note that Niketas' judgment of the man in the b-text is largely in line with that of Eustathios, who does not accord Alexios a significant role in those days.²³⁷ However, the historian's portrayal of Alexios in the a-text is almost an exaggeration of the avaricious, niggardly and lustful character that we read of in the account of William of Tyre.²³⁸ In addressing the reasons for this discrepancy we should turn to the public perception of Alexios and Maria-Xene at the time of the original composition. Alexios was the younger son of Manuel's elder brother Andronikos. His birth was celebrated in a panegyric poem written by Theodore Prodromos.²³⁹ He became a favourite of Manuel after the death of his elder brother

²³⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 244/48-59 om. Wb.

²³⁶ εἶχε μὲν οὖν τὰς χεῖρας εἰς παράταξιν ἱκανάς καὶ τοὺς δακτύλους πρὸς πόλεμον ἐδεδίδακτο· ἴσως δ' ἂν καὶ πλείονι πολέμου παρασκευῇ καὶ ὁρμῇ ὀξυτέρᾳ χρησάμενος τῷ τε Ἀνδρονίκῳ τὴν εἰς τὴν πόλιν πάροδον ἀπετείχισε καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀπείρατον διεφύλαξε τοῦ ἐφεστῶτος κακοῦ.

²³⁷ According to Eustathios of Thessaloniki, Alexios was second-in-command to the empress: *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 21, 27.

²³⁸ William of Tyre, II, pp. 462-63: 'Although, like all Greeks, he was extremely effeminate and completely given over to the lustful sins of the flesh, yet he was avaricious and sparing of the imperial treasure, as if he had earned it by himself with the sweat of his brow'. And later on: 'his attitude, moreover, was one of extreme haughtiness; he regarded no one as superior to himself but managed everything according to his own wishes without consulting the other lords. He seemed to care nothing for the rest, although they were magnificent men of rank quite equal to his own.'

²³⁹ *Theodoros Prodromos, historische Gedichte*, W. Hörander (ed.), Vienna 1974, pp. 409-10.

John in the battle of Myriokephalon (1176) and was entrusted by the emperor to carry out important diplomatic missions to the west, while at the same time he enjoyed the highest dignities at court.²⁴⁰ As *protosebastos* he was the most senior of the *sebastoi*, and as *protovestiaros* he was titular head of the imperial household. In fact, from a variety of sources we are left with the impression that Alexios was in fact held in great esteem due to his epithet and the privileged status that came with it.

In the b-text Niketas himself pays lip-service to this attitude by describing Alexios in terms of his illustrious family and good fortune.²⁴¹ Eustathios corroborates Niketas' picture by telling us that the removal of Alexios was due primarily to the jealousy and resentment of the rest of the members of the Komnenoi. Finally, Michael Choniates indicates that although Alexios had the greatest of fortunes bestowed upon him, only because of his lack of respect (an obvious allusion to the relationship with empress), was he punished.²⁴² Why should Alexios be portrayed in such mild terms by contemporary writers? Foremost, because as the grandson of John II Komnenos he belonged to the 'immense and great tree of the Komnenoi' as the court poet Prodromos put it.²⁴³ Indeed, as one scholar has acutely observed 'the Komnenian system made imperial relatives almost as immune from criticism as the emperor himself.'²⁴⁴ It is not after all coincidental that more than a century after the events, Skoutariotes complained about Alexios' ill treatment in captivity and condemned his guards for not taking into account his Komnenian lineage.²⁴⁵ Moreover, Alexios' 'tyrannical reign', whatever its shortcomings, was replaced by something even worse, and Andronikos, unlike Alexios was not content with 'unofficial' power, but usurped the throne and established his own regime.

This was widely recognised in the last decade of the twelfth century, and only the accession of the Angeloi put an end to what had become Andronikos' despised tyrannical regime. Niketas' own orations relate the common sentiments against the tyrant Andronikos, who is most conveniently held responsible for all the evils that befell the Byzantine Empire following the death of Manuel Komnenos.²⁴⁶ These sentiments are nowhere more pronounced than in Michael Choniates' speech to

²⁴⁰ Varzos, II, pp. 197-99.

²⁴¹ Nik.Chon., p. 249/87 PWb. This information is omitted in the a-text.

²⁴² Michael Choniates, I. p. 163: καὶ δὴ ὁ μὲν Ἰξίων ἔάλω παρὰ χρῆμα καὶ δέδωκε δίκην κατάλληλον οἷς παρ' ἀξίαν ἐπέιρα τηλικούτου βασιλείας κάλλος καὶ συλήσειν ὤετο.

²⁴³ Theodore Prodromos, *historische Gedichte*, p. 406.

²⁴⁴ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 465.

²⁴⁵ Skoutariotes, p. 320.

²⁴⁶ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 38/11-39/14, 88/34, 90/15-16.

Isaakios Angelos, where the new emperor was seen as the benefactor of his people because he saved them from the awful clutches of tyranny, while Andronikos was ‘the instigator of all the tragedies that befell us.’²⁴⁷

The revised text relates the public perception of Alexios at the time of his fall from power, whether this was accurate or not. At that time, rumours broadcasting the worthlessness of Alexios were circulated far and wide by his political enemies.²⁴⁸ That these sentiments reached the ears of William of Tyre in Syria is suggestive of the atmosphere of political intrigue in Constantinople and the vast amounts of propaganda that it generated. Niketas relates these in the a-text, and more importantly, as we have seen, alters his testimony concerning Alexios’ stand against Andronikos, first by telling us that the *protosebastos* was an able and worthy adversary and then that he was an indolent coward. We are thus inclined to believe that Niketas’ portrait of Alexios in the b-text was in line with the official perception prevalent in the late twelfth century; it was the despised tyrant Andronikos and not Alexios who was responsible for the evils of the time. In turn the portrait of the worthless Alexios in the a-text, was largely shaped by the propaganda circulated by the opposition, and perhaps had something to do with Niketas’ own desire to argue the disastrous rule of the Komnenoi. Characteristic of the author’s opinion in the a-text are the following lines: ‘whenever they [the Komnenoi] attempted to seize and rule over our public affairs, they were the most unfit, useless and stupid of men’.²⁴⁹ While other historians focused on sexual misconduct, or the threat of the Latins, Niketas placed emphasis on the character faults, shortcomings and ultimate failure of the *Komnenos* in charge.

Equally significant in tracing Niketas’ attitude towards the Komnenoi is the episode concerning the acclamation of the astrologer Alexios Kontostephanos by a popular faction, which contested the accession of Alexios III in 1195. In relating this episode in the b-text, Niketas simply tells us that while Euphrosyne was being escorted to the imperial palace, a ‘vulgar’ and ‘promiscuous’ faction gathered in Haghia Sophia and acclaimed Kontostephanos emperor. The pretender was arrested almost immediately and the incident ended without further complications. In the a-text, the author adds that the faction supporting Kontostephanos voiced the opinion

²⁴⁷ Michael Choniates I, p. 239/15 and also 210, 212, 226-27.

²⁴⁸ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 31

²⁴⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 529/29-31 om. b.

that they were fed up with the rule of the Komnenoi.²⁵⁰ Whether this opinion was in fact voiced by the faction or in reality expressed Niketas' personal thoughts is not particularly relevant for our purposes at this point. What is important is that this 'public' derision of the Komnenoi only appears in version a.²⁵¹

Niketas' cautious attitude to the Komnenoi in the b-text can be further confirmed by a number of seemingly curious omissions in his discussion of the reign of Isaakios II Angelos. These concern the uprisings of certain members of the Komnenian family, namely Isaakios Komnenos, an anonymous Komnenos, Constantine Tatikios, Andronikos Komnenos, Alexios Komnenos and another anonymous Komnenos.²⁵² Isaakios Komnenos had escaped from prison and entered Aghia Sophia in the hope that people would rally to his cause. He was apprehended and later died under torture.²⁵³ Constantine Tatikios, whose family was related to the Komnenoi by affinity, had hidden 500 of his followers within the city, but was seized and blinded. Another Komnenos, whom Niketas refuses to name, followed the same course as the others, but was arrested and blinded. These unsuccessful attempts at usurpation were carried out between the years 1191-93.²⁵⁴ They were altogether omitted in the b-text.

Moreover, although Niketas refers to the dangerous rebellion of the *dux* of Thessaloniki, Andronikos Komnenos,²⁵⁵ he refuses to provide us with detailed information about the episode in version b, which is subsequently recorded in almost minute detail in version a.²⁵⁶ Andronikos' accomplice on this occasion was Alexios, the illegitimate son of Manuel I.²⁵⁷ The rebellion of the son of the aforementioned Andronikos is altogether omitted in the b-text.²⁵⁸ Finally, the dangerous insurrection

²⁵⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 456/68-69 om. b.

²⁵¹ It cannot, however, be coincidental that anonymous and eponymous characters in the *Historia* criticise the Komnenoi for the same vices and errors in policy as Niketas does directly at other times. On this point, see also the remarks of J.N. Ljubarskij, 'Byzantine irony. The example of Niketas Choniates', in *Byzantium Matures: Choices, sensitivities, and modes of expression (eleventh to fifteenth centuries)*, ed. C. Angelidi, Athens 2004, pp. 297-298.

²⁵² See Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 12-28; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 84-85; Th. Vlachos, 'Aufstände Verschwörungen während der Komnenenzeit. Isaakios II. Angelos (1185-1195)', *Βυζ 6* (1974), pp. 155-67; K. Bourdara, 'Το έγκλημα καθοσιώσεως κατά την περίοδο της βασιλείας των Αγγέλων', *εν τιμαί Ιω. Τριανταφυλλοπούλου* (2000), pp. 437-64.

²⁵³ For this individual see: Varzos, II, pp. 507-11.

²⁵⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 423/8-20 om. b.

²⁵⁵ Varzos, II, pp. 83-85.

²⁵⁶ Nik.Chon., pp. 425/57-68 om. b.

²⁵⁷ Varzos, II, pp. 481-96.

²⁵⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 428/51-62.

of Michael Doukas (Komnenos Angelos),²⁵⁹ the son of Alexios III's paternal uncle, the *sebastokrator* John Doukas, and his subsequent defection to the sultan of Ikonion, Rukn al-Din was the source of major troubles in the eastern cities along the Meander around year 1200.²⁶⁰ This important incident is once again omitted in the b-text.

These series of omissions beg the question why. It was certainly not because Niketas wished to safeguard Isaakios from any bad press. Niketas was not protecting the emperor but the *Komnenian* rebels themselves. The historian had no qualms about relating the rebellions of Alexios Branas, Theodore Mangaphas or Constantine Aspietes.²⁶¹ But he exercised constraint when relating disturbances caused by the Komnenoi. As these movements were carried out in Constantinople in the early 1190s, it is hardly plausible that Niketas was unaware of their taking place at the time. As Niketas protected Andronikos I Komnenos and Alexios Komnenos, the *protosebastos* and *protovestiarios*, so he protected these scions of the Komnenoi in the b-text. He did so because he was writing at the court of Alexios III Komnenos. Indeed, the historian's discussion of this emperor's reign is the key to understanding the differences between the versions of the *Historia*. It is thus only fitting that we examine it in detail.

Alexios III Angelos

The coup d'état of 8 April 1195 brought to the throne of Byzantium Alexios III Angelos.²⁶² Niketas' account of the reign as it appears in the b-text represents a carefully-worked piece of imperial propaganda, while in the a-text it is merely a reflection of the bad statesmanship, deficient government and poor administration that led to the collapse of the empire. The astonishing difference between versions b and a specifically in the discussion of the reign of Alexios III becomes understandable if we assume that when Niketas was writing the original version at the

²⁵⁹ Michael was of course the creator of the separatist state of Epiros, which he ruled from 1205-ca. 1215, when he was assassinated. See Varzos, II, pp. 669-89.

²⁶⁰ Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, p.134; A. Savvides, 'Suleyman Shah of Rûm, Byzantium, Cilician Armenia and Georgia (A.D. 1197-1204)', *Byz* 73 (2003), p. 105 ff.

²⁶¹ Nik.Chon., pp. 377-88, 399-401, 428.

²⁶² For an assessment of Alexios in the literature see: Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 113-57; G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, New Brunswick-New Jersey 1969, pp. 408-17; Varzos, II, pp. 727-801; I. Karayannopoulos, *Ιστορία Βυζαντινού Κράτους*, III, Thessaloniki 1981 (repr. 1991), pp. 311-49; *ODB*, 1, pp. 64-65; *ΕΠΑΙΒΑ* I, pp. 237-40; E. Chaldeou, 'Byzantine Alexius III (1195-1203) as viewed in Choniates's History', *Λυσιστόρητον* V003 (11 July 2000), pp. 1-12.

court of the very same emperor, he was recording events virtually as they occurred.²⁶³ As a consequence the historian's discussion of the reign as it is appears in the b-text appears to have been written under the auspices of the imperial circle to which our author belonged.²⁶⁴

If rhetoric in the form of panegyric played an important role in broadcasting the official imperial image, so could state-sponsored historical writing.²⁶⁵ If orators were largely responsible for conveying the 'official' versions of events, so were contemporary historians – those whom one modern scholar has accurately characterised as 'mouth-pieces of Constantinople'.²⁶⁶ Indeed, the propagandistic tone of Niketas' original text is evident virtually from the beginning of Alexios' accession to the throne and more specifically, his murky path to power in 1195. A coup d'état is always difficult to justify, but Byzantine historians had done remarkably well in promoting the legitimacy of unlawfully seized power in the past, and the persuasive Niketas is no exception.²⁶⁷ In version b, the Emperor Isaakios sets out for his grand expedition against the Vlacho-Bulgarians in March of 1195, having taken along with him, his beloved brother, the *sebastokrator* Alexios and a number of distinguished representatives from the most influential aristocratic families in Byzantium. When the emperor arrived at Kypsella, he divided his forces and awaited the arrival of reinforcements. Then, the rebellious plot began to unfold (450/59-451/75):

Many of the noble men, pretending to be displeased by the emperor's disregard and the unsuitable manner in which he governed common affairs (and...affairs: and perceiving that changes in common affairs would contribute to their enrichment APW),

(The emperor's brother, who for a long time waited to seize the throne, then brought to light that which was hidden in his soul and secretly kindled in his breast V). Setting out for the chase, the emperor, upon preparing to mount his horse, sent for his brother to join

²⁶³ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCV.

²⁶⁴ For the various outlets of imperial propaganda see Kazhdan, 'Certain Traits of Imperial Propaganda', pp. 13-27 with specific reference to Niketas; C. Chamberlain, 'The Theory and Practice of Imperial Panegyric in Michael Psellus: The Tension between History and Rhetoric', *Byz* 56 (1986), pp. 16-27.

²⁶⁵ For rhetoric see Hunger, *Literatur*, I, pp. 65-74; Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 413-89.

²⁶⁶ Ahrweiler, *L'ideologie politique*, p. 79. See also important discussions in N. C. Koutrakou, *La propagande imperiale Byzantine: Persuasion et Reaction (VIIIe-Xe siècles)*, Athens 1993, pp. 157-59 and J. Shepard, 'The Uses of History in Byzantine Diplomacy: Observations and Comparisons', in *Porphyrogenita: Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin east in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides*, (eds.), C. Dedrinos et al., Ashgate 2003, p. 103ff.

²⁶⁷ See especially the exceedingly laudatory character of book V of *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonn 1838 (on Basil I, 867-86); and Anna Komnene's version of her father's (Alexios I, 1081-1118) accession to the throne: I/2.

at that time brought to light that which was hidden in their souls and secretly kindled within their breasts. Setting out for the chase, the emperor, upon preparing to mount his horse, sent for his brother to join him and head for the green and flowery fields of that place. Alexios refused to follow, alleging that he was being prepared to have a vein cut for bleeding. Those who shared the plot with Alexios, frauds, pestilent and unstable men, crowded into the tent, and when they observed that Isaakios had advanced some three stades, they pretended to seize Alexios, lead him to the imperial tent and proclaim him emperor (=b).²⁶⁸

him and head for the green and flowery fields of that place. Alexios, who was preparing to carry out the task at hand, refused to follow, saying that he was being prepared to have a vein cut for bleeding, and pretended to be ill. So, Isaakios set out alone for the matter at hand. Observing that his brother had advanced three stades from the tent, Alexios, along with his closest friends who had arranged and conspired with him, entered the imperial pavilion. These were: Theodore Branas, George Palaiologos, John Petraliphas, Constantine Raoul, Manuel Kantakouzenos, and many other perverse and unstable men who were related to the emperor, and the common herd, who for a long time had roamed through the banqueting hall of the *sebastokrator* and rejoiced at the change about to take place (=V).

In this way ends Niketas' narration of the successful coup. The opening lines of the first book dedicated to the new emperor are more revealing (453/3 ff.):

In such a manner Isaakios Angelos was removed from the throne, not by the judgement of his brother but by force, as was said, and by the tumultuous concourse of the whole army who had their swords drawn against him and threatened to kill him

In such a manner Isaakios Angelos was removed from the throne and easily divested of power. He was deprived of his sight by those whom he imagined led him by the hand as though they were his own eyes. For what could be closer or more genuine than a

²⁶⁸ τῶν δὲ εἴ γε γεγονότων συχνοὶ τῇ ἀκομιστίᾳ τοῦ κρατοῦντος δυσχεραίνειν πλαττόμενοι καὶ τῷ μὴ κατὰ τὸν εἰκότα λόγον τὰ κοινὰ διοικεῖσθαι πράγματα (καὶ...πράγματα: εἰπεῖν δὲ καὶ τὰς μεταβολὰς τῶν πραγμάτων κατὰ πολὺ συμβαλομένας αὐτοῖς ἐς χρηματισμὸν κατανοήσαντες APW) τότε τὰ ὑποδεδυκότα τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ ὑποθαλπόμενα τοῦ στῆθους ἀναμηνύοντες εἰς φῶς προήνεγκαν. τοίνυν ὁ μὲν αὐτοκράτωρ εἰς κυνηγέσιον ὁρμηθεὶς καὶ πρὸς τῷ ἔφιππος εἶναι γινόμενος μετπέμπετο καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν συνεξίεναι οἱ καὶ συνδιαχυθῆναι κατὰ τῶν ἐκεῖσε πεδίων τὰ ποώδη καὶ ἀνθηρά· ὁ δ' ἐπισπένεσθαι οἱ ἀπέπειπατο, πρὸς σχάσιν φλεβὸς ἐτοιμασθῆναι σκηψάμενος. οἱ δὲ τοῦ σκέμματος κοινωνοῦντες τῷ Ἀλεξίῳ λοιμοὶ καὶ κύβοι καὶ εὐριποὶ καὶ σκηνῆς γέμοντες ἄνθρωποι ὥσει σταδίους τρεῖς τὸν βασιλέα προϊόντα ἰδόντες συναρπάζουσιν εἰρωνικῶς τὸν Ἀλέξιον καὶ εἰς τὴν βασιλείον σκηνὴν τοῦτον εἰσάγουσι καὶ ἀναγορεύουσιν αὐτοκράτορα. (APW offer a mixture of the two versions).

if he did not accept the emperorship (=b).²⁶⁹

beloved brother? If water drowns us, what shall we men drink? And if our parts are armed against each other, how can they be brought together so that we may live?(=a).

The principal difference between the two versions is to be found in the role assigned to Alexios in the removal of Isaakios Angelos from the throne. In the b-text, Alexios is made to appear as the nominee of a group of discontented aristocrats who is actually threatened with the penalty of death should he refuse to accept the emperorship. In the a-text, Alexios assumes the role of the instigator of the plot and what is more, the discontented faction of aristocrats that supported him is named, and in certain versions provided with a clear motive for the coup. Later writers, such as Theodore Skoutariotes and Niketas' own paraphrast follow the version the coup as it appears in the b-text, laying the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the aristocracy.²⁷⁰ It is significant that this group is given a prominent role in modern accounts as well, and one historian has gone so far as to view the coup as 'une victoire de l'aristocratie occidentale.'²⁷¹

While it is clear that Alexios could not have acted alone, it is debatable whether he in fact instigated the plot, or was simply the natural focus of disaffection by reason of his relation to Isaakios. Alexios' subsequent fame for the 'mildness of his rule'²⁷² and the satirical epithet 'Bambacoravdos' (literally the one who carries a rod of cotton) applied to his person would suggest that he was not the kind of

²⁶⁹ καὶ τόνδε μὲν τὸν τρόπον ὁ Ἀγγελος Ἰσαάκιος τῆς ἀρχῆς καταστρέφεται, οὐ γνώμη μᾶλλον τοῦ αὐταδέλφου ἢ βία, ὡς ἦδετο, καὶ συνδρομῇ παντὸς τοῦ στρατεύματος, κατ' αὐτοῦ σπασαμένων τῶν πολλῶν τὰ ξίφη καὶ διηπειληκότων ἐκείνῳ θάνατον, εἰ μὴ τὴν ἀρχὴν καταδέξηται.

²⁷⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 453/3-5 B; Skoutariotes, pp. 412-14. The chronicler does not give us any names. According to Alberic de Trois-Fontaines, *Chronica*, ed. P. Scheffer-Boichorst, MGH, Scriptores 23, Hanover 1872, p. 870 (Engl. trans in A. J. Andrea, *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade*, Leiden 2000, p. 291) the co-conspirators of Alexios were Livernas [Theodore Branas], Nicholas [Nikolaos Kannabos?], Morcuflus [Alexios Mourtzouphlos], Constantius [Constantine Raoul], Achanas, Peter of Navarre and Synagun Kartaginenisis [Manuel Kantakouzenos?].

²⁷¹ Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 440-46; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 110-12; Varzos, II, p. 830; Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, p. 311. For the identity of Alexios' co-conspirators see: George Palaiologos, V. Laurent, 'Le Généalogie des premiers Paléologues' *Byz* 8 (1933), p. 148; John Petraliphas, Varzos, II, p. 554, n. 20, Constantine Raoul, S. Fassoulakis, *The Byzantine Family of Raoul-Ral(l)es*, Athens 1973, pp. 13-14; Manuel Kantakouzenos, D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) c.1100-1460. A genealogical and prosopographical study*, Washington DC, 1968: *Dumbarton Oaks Studies*, 11, p. 9. Nicol mistakenly names Michael Kantakouzenos (possibly Manuel's brother) as the co-conspirator of Alexios. This error arose from the variant readings of Niketas 451/72: Μιχαήλ: APW; Μανουήλ: V.

²⁷² Nik.Chon., pp. 547-548; *Panoplia Dogmatike*, (ed. S. Eustratiades), p. κβ'; *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 55/35, 56/7.

individual to sponsor such an endeavour.²⁷³ However, this does not necessarily mean that Alexios was not guilty of plotting to remove his brother from the throne, but it would appear that version b is, nevertheless, misleading in that it attempts to absolve Alexios from any guilt. On the other hand, it seems that in attempting to rectify his ‘inaccuracies’ in version a, Niketas perhaps went too far, probably in an effort to underline Alexios’ treachery against his brother, or at least that much is suggested by his lamentation on the lack of fraternal love in version a. In fact, in version a, the coup sets a precedent for ‘fratricide’ that spreads far and wide, breeding corruption among the people and leading to widespread lawlessness in the Byzantine lands.²⁷⁴

Niketas narrates the eight-year reign of Alexios III Angelos in two books. Book I begins with Alexios’ return to Constantinople and his subsequent coronation there. The narrative then follows the emperor’s valiant struggle against a pseudo-Alexios in Asia Minor, the continuing menace of the Vlacho-Bulgarians, the threat of invasion by the German emperor Henry VI, and Alexios’ dealings with the infamous Genoese pirate Gafforio and the Turks. The critical section on the internal administration of Alexios found in this first book is missing in version b. In book II, the narrative concentrates on the emperor’s successful efforts to crush the various rebellious movements in the Balkans as well as in the capital itself, and of course ends with the arrival of the Fourth Crusade and Alexios’ ignominious flight from the capital in July 1203. Again, any reference to the internal affairs of the empire is completely missing in the b-text.

In striking contrast, version a not only contains a host of supplementary information, but significantly expands on the information already offered in the b-text, and in most cases presents conspicuous alterations in the substance of the narration and more specifically on the emerging portrait of Alexios III as the ruler. As

²⁷³ For Alexios’ nickname *Βαμβακοράβδης*, see Nik.Chon., p. 453/1-2 add. W: Βασιλεία Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ ἀδελφοῦ Ἰσαακίου τοῦ Ἀγγέλου ἐν τόμοις τρισὶν (ὅς Ἀλέξιος λέγεται καὶ Βαμβακοράβδης). Discussion in N. Bees, ‘Bambacoratus’, ein Beiname des Kaisers Alexios III. Angelos (1195-1203), *BNJ* 3 (1922), pp. 285-86.

²⁷⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 453/3ff. It seems that Niketas was compelled to justify the legitimacy of Alexios’ rule in his encomia dedicated to this emperor: *Orationes et epistulae*: pp. 56-58. Three of Niketas’ orations to Alexios survive: no. 7 (pp. 53-68, ca. 1200), Alexios’ campaigns against Ivanko in the west and the Turks in the east; no. 10 (pp. 101-106, ca. 1200/01), Alexios returns from the east after his treaty with the sultan of Ikonion and the rebellion of John Komnenos ‘the Fat’. (For the latter see exhaustive account in Nikolaos Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, ed. A. Heisenberg, Programm des Königlichen alten Gymnasiums zu Würzburg für das Studienjahr 1906/1907, Würzburg 1907); no. 11 (pp. 106-13, 1202), Alexios’ triumphant victories over Manuel Kamytzes, Drobomir Chrysos, Ioannitsa and Spyridonakes. For the dating and interpretation of Niketas’ orations see van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 96-105, 122-36.

we shall see, version b, although clearly lacking the panegyric tone of Niketas' own orations to this emperor, is nevertheless quite favourable to the sovereign. On the other hand, version a can only be accurately described as an angry diatribe against the emperor and his collaborators, who are most conveniently held responsible for the fall of Constantinople in 1204.

Niketas achieves this effect by emphasizing Alexios' failure to deal effectively with the multitude of encroaching enemies, his deceitful character and his manifest inability to control his rapacious relatives. Yet the fundamental difference between the two versions lies not so much in what happened, but rather in why and how it happened. An excellent example of the manner in which Niketas effortlessly manipulates the narration of events is offered by Alexios' actions immediately following his accession to power (454/21ff. b; 455/51-55 VAPW):

Upon assuming the emperorship, Alexios did not straightaway return to Constantinople, but devoted himself to the western provinces, which were suffering because of Peter and Asan (=b).²⁷⁵

[...] Alexios allowed the troops to disband and return home for no reason and even though the Vlachs along with the Cumans were plundering everything before them. He himself did not hasten to return to Constantinople straightaway because as his brother had already been apprehended and blinded, he did not suspect any danger, and thus tarried in the stops along the way (=VAPW).

Although it is clear that the emperor did not return to the capital immediately, his reason for doing this is left open to interpretation. In version b, the conscientious Alexios straightaway fulfils his duties as emperor, whereas in a, he dismisses the troops and returns to the capital at a leisurely pace.

A more detailed and comprehensive episode is offered by the perilous insurrection of the Vlach military commander Drobomir Chrysos in 1196/97.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ βασιλεύσας δ' Ἀλέξιος οὐκ εὐθὺς τὴν μεγαλόπολιν εἴσεισιν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς μὲν τοῖς κατὰ δύσιν προσανέχει πράγμασι, πάσχουσι κακῶς παρὰ τοῦ Πέτρου καὶ τοῦ Ἀσάν.

²⁷⁶ The rebellion of Drobomir Chrysos is also discussed by Niketas in his encomium to Alexios III: *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 108/13ff. See also the account of the court orator Nikephoros Chrysoberges, *Nicephori Chrysobergae Ad Angelos orationes tres*, ed. M. Treu, Programm des Königlichen Friedrichs-Gymnasiums zu Breslau, 1892, II. Wissenschaftliche Abhandlung, Breslau 1892, pp. 19, 21; For the literature: Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 128-29; Hoffmann, *Territorialstaaten*, pp. 47-50; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 132, 450-53.

Chrysos had been initially given the command of a mercenary unit of his compatriots, which fought for the Byzantine side against Peter and Asan. Later, he decided to cast off Byzantine authority, occupied the area around Strumnitsa, captured the virtually impregnable fortress of Prosakon overlooking the Vardar valley and was slowly carving himself a sizeable independent principality in southern Macedonia. The emperor led two expeditions against the rebel. The first campaign in the summer of 1196 lasted a mere two months and accomplished next to nothing. The second expedition in the spring of 1197 was not successful either, but it appears that the Byzantines did force Chrysos into some kind of an agreement.²⁷⁷ Niketas altogether omits the first expedition in the b-text.²⁷⁸ The second expedition is related in both versions (503/36 ff.):

Some believed that Prosakon should be initially bypassed and that all the remaining towns should first be captured. For in this way the soldiery would be emboldened by their capture of easily subduable places and gain booty from there. Chrysos, pressured by the compelling circumstances, might alter his plans for the better, either by surrendering or by despairing of his situation. The emperor decided to lead the army to conduct the war against Chrysos straightaway and brandishing his spear, said: 'I believe that should he be captured, no one will be able to resist us in the future.' (=b) ²⁷⁹

Those among the Romans who were experienced in warfare, if there were any left at the time, and who were not ignorant of the features of the land, deemed it necessary and advised the emperor to bypass Prosakon and attack the remaining towns and villages loyal to Chrysos, and that only after they are captured should they go against Prosakon They recommended these things. The castrated chamberlains of the emperor, among whom the first was George Oinaïotes and his retinue of beardless manikins, fiercely opposed them. These old and clever attendants of the emperor convinced him to lead the army straightaway into Prosakon and conduct the war against Chrysos, and brandishing the spear, said: 'should he be captured, no one will be able to resist us in the future...for

²⁷⁷ Dölger-Wirth, *Regesten*, no. 1653.

²⁷⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 487/56-75 om. b.

²⁷⁹ ἐνίοις μὲν οὖν ἐδόκει παραλλάξαι τὸν Πρόσακον καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ πολισμάτια μετελθεῖν καὶ μετὰ τὴν τούτων χεῖρωσιν τῷ Προσάκῳ παρεμβαλεῖν. οὕτω γὰρ ἐσεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ στράτευμα εὐθαρσέστερον τὰ εὐχείρωτα καταστρεψάμενον πρότερον καὶ λείαν ἐκεῖθεν περιβαλλόμενον, καὶ αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν Χρῦσον τῇ βίᾳ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀγχόμενον μεταβουλεύσασθαι τι χρηστότερον, ἐνδόντα τοῦ ἄγαν ἢ καὶ ἀπογνόντα τῶν καθ' αὐτόν. ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς εὐθυῶρως ἐς τὸν Πρόσακον ἄγειν ἐγνώκει τὴν στρατιάν καὶ κατ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ Χρῦσου φέρειν ἀντία τὰ ὄπλα καὶ τὸ δόρυ διαγκωνίζεσθαι, ὥς εἰ οὗτος ἀλώσεται γνωματεύων, οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις ἐς τὸ ἐξῆς ἀντιστήσεται.

why should anyone remain for long in these barbaric and unpleasant lands for none or little gain when the Propontis is laden with figs, melons and other fruits planted by the hand of God in paradise and are now beginning to ripen? ...The emperor rode full speed ahead to Prosakon (=VAPW).

The siege pressed on, but despite their perseverance, the Byzantines were not successful because the tools required for the demolition of the wall had not been supplied when needed. This was the fault of the officer in charge, a eunuch who was favoured by the emperor.²⁸⁰ Thus Chrysos' army prevailed (506/26-507/59):

In such a way did the Romans contend hotly on that day and disperse. The following day they came out for another encounter, but the barbarians, using stone-throwing machinery killed many by discharging the stones from on high successfully. During the night they let down from above empty wine jars made from twigs that sounded like drums, whose loud noise frightened the soldiers. But even though matters were such, Chrysos sued for peace and asked the emperor to be allowed to keep Prosakon by his [the emperor's] concession, on the condition that he should marry a woman of royal blood. The emperor accepted his proposals, left Prosakon and upon entering Constantinople sent a noble woman to be the bride of Chrysos (=b).²⁸¹

In such a way did the Romans contend hotly on that day and disperse. The following day they came out for another encounter... During the night the barbarians went unnoticed as they exited the fortress and destroyed the siege engines that the Romans had set up on those hills. The frightened troops of the night watch fled to the tent of the *protovestiarios* John. Alarmed at these happenings, the *protovestiarios* straightaway leaped out from his bed, and quivering and fainting from fear, took to flight. They divided up the contents of the tent, in which were found the frog green buskins of the *protovestiarios*, and spent the entire night mocking and laughing at the Romans. Moreover, they let down from above empty wine jars made from twigs that sounded like drums, whose loud noise

²⁸⁰ Nik.Chon., pp. 505/94-506/17.

²⁸¹ κατ' ἐκείνην μὲν οὖν τὴν ἡμέραν οὕτω Ῥωμαῖοι διημιλλήθησάν τε καὶ διελύθησαν, τὴν δ' ἐπιοῦσαν πρὸς δευτέραν πάλιν ἐξήεσαν συμπλοκὴν. ἀλλ' οἱ βάρβαροι μηχανήμασι χρώμενοι πολλοὺς ἀνέρουν ἐπιτυχῶς τε καὶ ἀφ' ὕψους ἀφιέντες τοὺς λίθους. καὶ νυκτὸς δὲ οἶνων δοχεῖα διαχαλῶντες ἄνωθεν τυμπανοειδῆ ἐκ λύγων καὶ διάκενα ἐξίστων τῷ δούπῳ τὸ στράτευμα. ὅμως καὶ οὕτως ἔχων ὁ Χρύσος ἐς ξυμβάσεις ἐτράπετο καὶ δεῖται τοῦ βασιλέως κατὰ συγχώρησιν αὐτοῦ κατέχειν τὸν Πρόσακον ἐπὶ δὲ καὶ γυναικὶ συζευχθῆναι μιᾷ τοῦ αἵματος βασιλικοῦ. βασιλεὺς οὖν τὰς αἰτήσεις αὐτοῦ δεξάμενος ἐκ τοῦ Προσάκου μεθίσταται καὶ τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν εἰσιὼν μίαν τῶν εὐγενῶν εἰς γαμετὴν πέπομφεν ἐκείνῳ...

frightened the soldiers, who did know what was going on in the dark. The emperor, seeing that he was not achieving his purpose and not willing to remain in those parts any longer, asked for peace. He gave possession of Prosakon, Strumnitsa and the surrounding lands to Chrysos, and agreed to give him one of his kinswomen in marriage, even though Chrysos did not lack a wife. Upon entering Byzantion he divorced the daughter of the *protostrator* from her husband and sent her to Chrysos (=VAPW).

What we are confronted with here is essentially the same story told in a different light. In the b-text it is obvious that Niketas slurs over or simply omits certain details. In a-text, he first discloses the reason behind the decision of an immediate assault; and in the end by changing a few words, what in b is presented as a success in unexpectedly snaring the rebel, in a is instantly transformed into concession. Two matters arise from Niketas' alterations. For one, it is obvious that for our historian it is inconsequential who actually brandished the sword and boasted of an imminent triumph against the rebel. What is important is the purpose to which he put the material he collected. Thus in version b, the comment is attributed to the emperor in an effort to highlight his courage and determination to crush the rebellion instantly. In version a, an effeminate eunuch delivers a speech in front of the war council that actually argues in favour of a swift onslaught on the basis of personal comfort! Moreover, the remark that there were no Romans experienced in warfare at the time as well as the scene depicting the *protovestiarios* 'quivering and fainting from fear', serve to underline the defective picture of the empire of Alexios III that Niketas was attempting to reconstruct in the a-text.

A further example of this sort of manipulation is offered by Niketas' narration of the diplomatic exchanges between Alexios and the German emperor Henry VI (1190-97).²⁸² Henry, as ruler of Sicily, laid claim to all the Byzantine provinces laying between Dyrrachion and Thesssaloniki, presenting as an excuse that the

²⁸² Dölger-Wirth, *Regesten*, no. 1638.

Sicilians had been expelled from these lands due to Roman deceit in 1185.²⁸³ Two envoys from the German Emperor reached Alexios before Christmas 1196. They demanded the payment of huge sums of money, all the while making false pretensions and boasting so as to intimidate their audience (477/66-479/46):

The emperor whose reign is now being recounted could not dismiss the envoys empty-handed, and thus consented in pretence rather than reality to exchange money for peace. The envoys demanded a payment for peace in the largest amount in gold pounds. The emperor sent as his envoy to the king, Eumathios Philokales, eparch of the City, willingly providing for his attire as envoy and the insignia of eparch, and sent him to the German king. Because the money to be paid in exchange for peace amounted to about sixteen hundred pounds, Philokales accepted their dispatch to Sicily. But God delivered us from the payment in a novel fashion; for the king died (=b).²⁸⁴

The emperor whose reign is now being recounted could not dismiss the envoys empty-handed, and thus consented to exchange money for peace, something, which had not been done until up to that time. The emperor Alexios, intent on removing the wealth of the Roman empire, performed no deeds suitable to the times, but did that which was neither respectful nor dignified and was almost scoffed by the Romans ...Exhausted by the negotiations, the emperor sent as his envoy to the king Eumathios Philokales, the eparch of the City. He was the wealthiest man in the empire, and willingly accepted the role of envoy. He asked the emperor that along with the insignia of eparch he be given those of envoy. The emperor was pleased to provide him with supplies, but stated that he must set out on the mission at hand at his own expense. Thus, Philokales appeared strange and eccentric; not only was he not honoured as former envoys but he was also mocked because of the strangeness of his dress. Because the money to be given in exchange for peace came to be about sixteen hundred pounds of gold, Philokales awaited

²⁸³ Nik.Chon., p.476/43ff; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 189-93.

²⁸⁴ βασιλεὺς τοίνυν (ἦρχε δὲ ὁ νῦν ἱστορούμενος) μὴ ἔχων ἀπράκτους ἀποπέμψασθαι τοὺς πρέσβεις, κατένευσεν οὐ πράγματι μᾶλλον ἢ σχήματι χρημάτων τὴν εἰρήνην ἀλλάξασθαι. ἠρίθμουν δὲ οἱ πρέσβεις τὰ ὑπὲρ εἰρήνης αἰτούμενα χρήματα εἰς πλεῖστα χρυσίου κεντηνάρια, πρεσβεύοντα οὖν ἐς τὸν ῥῆγα πέπομφε τὸν Φιλοκάλην Εὐμάθιον, ἑπαρχὸν ὄντα τῆς πόλεως, ἐκόντως ὑποδύντα τὸν πρέσβιν καὶ δεηθέντα μετὰ τῶν ἐπαρχικῶν παρασῆμων τῷ τῶν Ἀλαμανῶν ἐποφθῆναι ῥηγί. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰ τῆς εἰρήνης ἔνεκα δοθησόμενα χρήματα εἰς δέκα πρὸς τοῖς ἔξ περιέστησαν κεντηνάρια, ὁ μὲν Φιλοκάλης τὴν τούτων ἀποστολὴν κατὰ Σικελίαν προσεδέχετο. ὁ δὲ θεὸς λύει τὴν δόσιν ταύτην καινοπρεπῶς, θανάτῳ γὰρ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ὁ ῥῆξ ἐγένετο.

their arrival in Sicily, where he met with the king, while the emperor, saying that he lacked money, taxed the provinces, imposing for the first time the so-called *Alamanikon*... And what followed? But who is worthy to speak of the mighty deeds of the Lord or cause his praises to be heard? The death of the King of Germany occurred before the dispatch of the money (=a).

In version b, the cunning Alexios outmanoeuvres his enemies and therefore buys the empire time in order to decide on what course of action to follow. In the a-text, the incompetent emperor is responsible for depleting the finances of the state and bringing shame upon his own people. Clearly this was a contentious issue, but if Niketas' is less than sincere in version b, his obviously slanted interpretation in a is at best questionable, for he does not consider the possibility that the government may have been faced with real problems, but instead explains Alexios' actions in terms of his personal motivation and inability to react to foreign aggression. The utter helplessness of the emperor and the caricature-like portrait of his envoy, Philokales only lend weight to the sheer absurdity of the situation.

This does not, however, mean that Niketas did not have justifiable grounds to criticise Alexios III, for it is often the case that he reveals damaging information he had previously suppressed in the b-text. During the festivities held in honour of the marriages of the emperor's daughters (1199/1200?), the grooms being Alexios Palaiologos and the future emperor Theodore I Laskaris,²⁸⁵ news arrived that the Vlach commander of Philippopolis, Ivanko-Alexios, had rebelled.²⁸⁶ Although the emperor had been forewarned, he did not heed the reports, deeming Ivanko's loyalty assured because he was married to Alexios' granddaughter. In the spring of 1200, the emperor was forced to lead a campaign against the rebel (518/14-519/33ff.):

²⁸⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 508/67-509/17 om. b. Niketas had not included this information in the b-text, perhaps because it was not at the time viewed particularly significant. These two marriages, however, proved to be of great importance for the future. Theodore Laskaris became the Byzantine emperor in exile at Nicaea and founded the dynasty of the Laskarids, while the grandson of Andronikos Palaiologos was none other than the usurper Michael VIII (1259-82), who founded the dynasty of the Palaiologoi.

²⁸⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 509/18ff; For the rebellion see also, *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 59-64; Hoffmann, *Territorialstaaten*, pp. 51-55; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 130-31; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 132-33.

[The emperor] invited the rebel Alexios to make peace, as he was related to him by marriage, but did not neglect everything related to war. He took charge of the troops and arrived in the province of Philippopolis, where he encamped near the fortress of Stenimachos. In that place, many of the barbarians had taken refuge. Laying siege to that place, he took it by force and enslaved those within. After a short while he snared Ivanko through sworn compacts and deceit, not assenting to the words of David as they were spoken, 'with the pure you shall become pure whereas with the crooked you shall become shrewd' (=b).²⁸⁷

[The emperor] dispatched those envoys closest to him to Alexios, inviting him to make peace. He considered ways of murdering him, without at all giving up the idea of war. The emperor took charge of the troops and arrived in the province of Philippopolis, where he encamped near the fortress of Stenimachos. In that place, many of the barbarians had taken refuge. Laying siege to that place, he took it by force and enslaved those within it...When the treaties and sworn compacts had been made as the rebel had asked, the emperor devised a scheme, which I do not know whether it is suitable to generals and emperors, since they, above all others are required to keep their oaths. In order to lure Alexios to himself, he dispatched his eldest son-in-law, Alexios with imperial instructions, and after the sworn compacts were made, as I have said, he had him seized him and put in chains (=VAP).

The emperor's deception, quite obvious in the a-text, is latently present in the b-text in the form of the potent quotation from the Psalms of David (17. 26-27). Therefore, it is not the case that Niketas changes his opinion of Alexios III in the a-text, but that he merely has the opportunity to express himself openly. The author had in fact utilised this same phrase when he referred to the emperor's success over the rebel Ivanko-Alexios in his encomium: 'and with other means, whichsoever are pleasing to God, you innovate, showing yourself pure to the pure and shrewd to the crooked'.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ πλὴν τὸ τῶν πραγμάτων ἄγριον καὶ δυσπρόσιτον, ὡς ὁ καιρὸς ἐδίδου, περιποππύζων καὶ διασαίνων παντοῖος ἐγένετο καὶ τὸν ἀποστάτην Ἀλέξιον ἐς ξυμβάσεις προσκαλούμενος ἦν ὡς ὠκειωμένον αὐτῷ κατ' ἀγχιστείαν, μηδὲ τοῦ πολέμου παντάπασιν ἀμελῶν. τῷ τοι τὴν στρατιὰν ἀναλαβὼν καὶ τὴν Φιλίππου ἐπαρχίαν καταλαβὼν περὶ τὸ φρούριον στρατοπεδεύεται τὸν Στενίμαχον, εἰς ὃ πολλοὶ τῶν βαρβάρων συνέφυγον, καὶ διειληφῶς αὐτὸ τοῖς στρατεύμασιν ἐξεῖλέ τε κατὰ κράτος καὶ τοὺς ἐνόντας ἠνδραποδίσαστο. μετὰ βραχὺ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Ἀλέξιον μεθ' ὅρκου καὶ ἀπάτης συνείληφε τὴν ἑμετὰ ὀσίου ὅσιος ἔση καὶ μετὰ στρεβλοῦ διαστρεψῆς Δαυιτικὴν φωνὴν οὐχ ὡς ἐρρέθη ἐπηνεκῶς.

²⁸⁸ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 63/24-26: τοῖς τε ἄλλοις μεθοδεύμασιν, ὅποσα φιλεῖ Θεός, καινουργεῖ μετὰ ὀσίου γινόμενος ὅσιος καὶ διαστρέφων μετὰ στρεβλοῦ.

It is thus evident that the author reveals a great deal of information that he had previously omitted. It is certainly not coincidental that the bulk of this information relates not only to the emperor himself, but also to his closest collaborators. Pages 483/35-493/66 are altogether missing in the b-text. The author begins this section with a discussion on the emperor himself. He tells us that when Alexios first assumed the reins of power he issued a proclamation that henceforth ministries would not be auctioned off for money, but awarded according to merit. Although this noble sentiment won him the praise of our critical historian, the measure was a complete failure. According to Niketas, the avaricious relatives of the emperor appropriated the public funds for themselves and thus the sale of offices became rife, and the ministries went from bad to worse. He further lays direct responsibility for this situation on Alexios' light-mindedness and ineptness in governing the affairs of the state.²⁸⁹

The historian goes on to tell us that the Empress Euphrosyne,²⁹⁰ witnessing the deterioration of public affairs, intervened and appointed as her chief minister Constantine Mesopotamites, who had served as *epi tou kanikleiou*, under the previous administration. Then follows the conspiracy hatched by the empress' relatives, Basil Kamateros and Andronikos Kontostephanos to remove the threatening Mesopotamites, and thereafter Niketas' account is entirely focused on a series of intrigues that plagued the court of Alexios.²⁹¹ Indeed, he dedicates the remainder of this long addition to the fraudulent career of the cunning Mesopotamites, and provides us with a vivid account of his final fall from power due to the machinations of his major political rival, Michael Stryphnos.²⁹² It is clear that such information could not be included in the b-text.

Our final discussion will concentrate on Alexios' handling of the Fourth Crusade, an episode which is related in three text versions in the successive order of b, LO, and a. As we had elsewhere suggested, this section of the b-text was composed before Niketas moved to Nicaea at the end of 1206/beginning of 1207.

²⁸⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 483/45ff.

²⁹⁰ For Euphrosyne see Polemis, *The Doukai*, p. 131; L. Garland, *Byzantine Empresses. Women and Power in Byzantium A.D. 527-1204*, London 1999, pp. 210-24.

²⁹¹ Nik.Chon., pp. 484/76ff. This episode will be discussed in detail later on.

²⁹² Michael Stryphnos was the husband of Theodora Kamatere, sister of Empress Euphrosyne. During the reign of Isaakios he held the office *epi tou vestiariou* (higher tax official) and under Alexios III, he assumed the office of *megas dux*. See Nik.Chon., pp. 482/21ff., 491/3-24; Michael Choniates, I, p. 324, II, p. 98.

Version LO was written in the early years of the second decade of the thirteenth century, and version a, ca. 1215/17. As will become evident, Niketas' description of the emperor's reaction to the menacing threat posed by the crusade was largely, if not entirely dictated by the purpose of the author at each distinctive phase of the composition. In fact, one can visibly discern the hardening of Niketas' stance towards the emperor as the revision process progressed from b-LO-a. The further away we get from 1203, the more eager Niketas is to allocate responsibility on the shoulders of Alexios. This can be clearly illustrated in the following episodes.

Once the Latin fleet had put in at Chalcedon, Niketas describes a feeble Byzantine resistance characterised mostly by cowardice and inactivity. He briefly refers to the military engagement east of the Latin camp at Scutari (1 July, 1203) and the taking of the tower of Galata (5-6 July, 1203).²⁹³ Alexios does not appear until the first devastating siege on the city (17 July, 1203). According to Niketas, the combined attack of both sea and land forces was ferocious and when the Venetians occupied a section of the wall and set fire to the adjoining houses, all hell broke loose within the city. The emperor's response is described as follows (545/51ff.):

When the emperor saw the pitiable misfortune of the city and the affliction of the people, without reserve, he took up arms. He saw that most were bristling with anger and speaking offensive words by which they only emboldened the spirits of the enemy, and no assistance whatsoever was being given to the corrupted city. It was as though none of those within knew how to give battle, and that they did not realise that anticipating the enemy is better than being anticipated by him, much like the body does not recover by succumbing to harsh illness. Alexios left the palace with a detachment of horsemen and a noble infantry regiment, gathered together from among the high born of the city. When the enemy's land forces suddenly saw this

When Alexios saw the pitiable misfortune of the city and the affliction of the people, without reserve, he took up arms. He saw that most were bristling with anger, speaking offensive words and hurling abuses against him. His choice to remain within the walls had emboldened the spirits of the enemy, and his resolve to offer no assistance to the corrupted city, but to allow the enemy to reach the walls, something, which had never happened before, was as though he did not realise that forethought is better than afterthought and that to anticipate the enemy is better than to be anticipated by him, much like the body does not recover by succumbing to harsh illness. Alexios left the palace with a detachment of

²⁹³ Nik.Chon., p. 542/59 ff.; D. Queller & T. Madden, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople, 1201-1204*, Philadelphia 1997², pp. 101-18.

huge array, they shuddered from fear...Now the faintheartedness, lack of courage and unwillingness to brave danger (of the emperor and add. LO) of the troops turned the city into a miserable corpse, and contrary to her destiny, hastened along her prolonged destruction...Having returned to the palace, Alexios knew that he had to surrender to the times rather than precariously resist the height of danger. He then set out to Delveton about the first watch of the night, where he had made preparations for his own arrival (=bLO).²⁹⁴

horsemen and a noble infantry regiment, gathered together from among the high born in the city. When the enemy's land forces suddenly saw this huge array they shuddered from fear... Now the persistent thought of flight and the faintheartedness of those around him prevented Alexios from doing what the times required...Having returned to the palace, Alexios prepared his escape. It was as though he had laboured hard to turn the city into a miserable corpse, and contrary to her destiny, hasten along her prolonged destruction...About the first watch of the night he rode on to Delveton, where he had made preparations for his own arrival. (=a).

The discrepancy between the two accounts is self-evident. In the b-text, the riotous populace and the cowardly forces are held responsible for emboldening the enemy and in effect driving the emperor from the city. In version a, however, it is Alexios' premeditated intention to flee that dictates his disgraceful behaviour on the battlefield and thereafter serves to explain his lack of defensive preparations.²⁹⁵ But once again the underlying difference is not to be found in what actually happened, for we know that the Byzantine army retreated before the crusaders outside the land walls of Constantinople and that the disgraced Alexios subsequently fled, but we do not know how or why this occurred. Herein lies the fundamental difference between the

²⁹⁴ ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς τὸ οἰκτρὸν τοῦτο τῆς βασιλίδος δυστύχημα καὶ τὴν συνοχὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐλαβηθεὶς ὀπλίτης γίνεται μόλις, καὶ μάλισθ' ὅτι πρὸς ὀργὴν τοὺς πλείους ἐπιφρίσσοντας ἑώρα καὶ λόγους ἐπαχθεὶς ἀφιέντας, οἷς ἐπὶ μᾶλλον τὰ τῶν ἐναντίων φρονήματα ἤρετο, μηδεμιᾶς ἀρωγῆς ὑπονοθευομένη τῇ πόλει προσγινομένης ὡς εἶπερ οὐδένες τῶν ἐνόντων ἠπίσταντο πολεμεῖν, μηδὲ βέλτιον ἤδεσαν τὸ φθάσθαι τὸν ἀντίπαλον μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ παρ' αὐτοῦ προληφθῆναι, ὅσα καὶ τὸ σῶμα δεινῷ καχεκτῆματι τὴν ἱασιν ὑπεπαίοντι. ἐξίῳν τοίνυν τῶν ἀρχείων ἱππότας πλείστους πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπεσπάσατο καὶ πεζὴ τις φάλαγξ οὐκ ἀγεννῆς συνδεδράμηκεν ἐκ τῆς ἀκμῆς τῆς πόλεως, ὥστε καὶ τῷ κατὰ χέρσον πολεμίῳ στρατεύματι φρικασμὸς ἐπεγένετο σώματος, μεγίστην αἰφνιδὸν θεασαμένῳ παράταξιν...νῦν δὲ τὸ εὐπτόητον τοῦ στρατεύματος καὶ τὸ μὴ εὐθαρσὲς (τοῦ κρατοῦντος add. LO) καὶ φιλοκίνδυνον εἰς ἀτυχὲς πτῶμα φερομένην τὴν πόλιν καὶ ὑπερ αἶσαν ἠφάντωσε καὶ τὸν ταύτης ἀποτεταμένον συνέτεμεν ὀλεθρον...εἰσιῶν οὖν Ἀλέξιος τὰ βασίλεια ἔγνω δεῖν μεθίστασθαι τῷ καιρῷ μηδὲ ταῖς ἀκμαῖς τῶν κινδύνων ἀντιβαίνειν ἐπισφαλῶς. οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ πρώτην φυλακὴν τῆς νυκτὸς τὸ Δεβελτὸν ἄπεισιν, ἔνθα τὴν οἰκείαν προητοιμάκει κατάλυσιν.

²⁹⁵ In a subsequent passage added in version a, Niketas explains the emperor's behaviour solely on the basis of this intention (544/9-12): 'Emperor Alexios had long ago stored within his soul his intention to flee, and for that reason he did not take up arms, nor was he seen opposing the enemy, but remained a spectator of events.'

two versions of the text and it is clear that Niketas' interpretation was always linked to the purpose of his writing. The historian is confident that the Byzantine army did not engage the enemy out of fear and cowardice, but it is evident that in the older versions of the text he could not brand the emperor a coward. Yet, his version of events in the a-text is in many cases contradicted by the Latin sources.

Niketas had faithfully described the episodes of Byzantine resistance to the crusaders prior to the first siege of the city, but neglected to mention that upon learning of the crusaders' movements the emperor placed the army on the European side of the straits opposite them to resist an attempted landing.²⁹⁶ Nor did he tell us that when the crusaders attacked the suburb of Galata across the Golden Horn, the emperor had arrayed his forces there to meet the attack, and that he himself was present.²⁹⁷ In addition to this, Alexios' stance during the first siege of the city needs to be re-examined. Niketas' allegations that the citizenry rose up against the emperor once the hellish fire had broken out in Constantinople are also related by western sources.²⁹⁸ Such a reaction was certainly to be expected; the citizens of Constantinople were willing to support their emperor against the claims of his nephew, but they were not prepared to sacrifice their city in the process.²⁹⁹ Finally, as far as the ignoble retreat of the Byzantine forces on 17 July, 1203 is concerned, it is more plausible that sustain that Alexios had only exited the city to threaten the crusader camp and in that way force the Venetians, who were at that time occupying a section of the sea wall, to retreat. And this they did immediately.³⁰⁰

The reason for the emperor's flight from the capital is difficult to understand, but Niketas' testimony that Alexios had from the beginning intended to flee is at best shaky. Some modern historians have postulated that the flight of Alexios was more due to an internal threat rather than one coming from the crusader camp.³⁰¹ This seems a more reasonable explanation than the one put forward by Niketas centring on

²⁹⁶ Villehardouin, p. 61. Also in Count Hugh of Saint Pol's report to the West: Andrea, *Contemporary Sources*, p. 190-91.

²⁹⁷ Villehardouin, p. 66.

²⁹⁸ Ernoul and Bernard le Trésorier, *Chronique*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie, Paris 1871, pp. 364-65.

²⁹⁹ See letter of three crusader leaders to Innocent III dated to August 1203: *Register*, 6:210 (211), in Andrea, *Contemporary Sources*, p. 82. They reported that Emperor Alexios had spread propaganda among his people, stating that the pretender along with the Latins would subvert ancient liberties, change the laws and force obedience to the Pope.

³⁰⁰ Villehardouin, p. 72; Queller & Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 125-29; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, p. 240: Favours a different chronology, Brand believes that the eruption of the fire caused Alexios to retreat hastily within the city.

³⁰¹ Queller & Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 108.

the cowardice of the emperor or the Byzantines in general. Moreover, the retreat of the imperial forces created a great outcry within the city against the emperor.³⁰² Niketas' own phrase, 'he had to surrender to the times rather than precariously resist the height of danger', could imply that Alexios feared the reaction of his own people. The peculiarity of his situation could certainly dictate such a response on the part of the emperor. After all, the crusaders carried the son of Isaakios II Angelos, who may have been viewed by certain circles within Constantinople as the legitimate heir to the throne of Byzantium. Fearing that his time on the throne was limited, Alexios III chose flight, but did not relinquish his throne or his territories.³⁰³

It appears that like the bulk of the citizenry of Constantinople, Niketas was not aware of the precise circumstances of the confrontation between the Byzantine and Latin forces, and thus to him, Alexios' behaviour – retreat and subsequent flight – amounted to treason. He could not lay the responsibility on the shoulders of the emperor in version b, but could hardly show restraint in a, when he vented his anger at 'the miserable wretch among men', who abandoned his own people. With hindsight, he formulated the theory of Alexios' intention to flee, which conveniently explained all the emperor's actions thereafter. Moreover, what can easily appear as lack of preparation on the part of the emperor from hindsight, from the vantage point

³⁰² Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, trans. E. H. McNeal, New York 1936, p. 77; J. Gordon, 'The Novgorod Account of the Fourth Crusade', *Byz* 43 (1973), pp. 297-311: on people's reactions to the burning of the city.

³⁰³ This supposition is supported by western sources. See Alberic of Trois Fontaines, *Chronicle*: In Andrea, *Contemporary Sources*, p. 298-99 who claims that Alexios fled because he feared his own people would betray him to the Franks. Also Gunther of Pairis, *The capture of Constantinople (Hystoria Constantinopolitana)*, trans. A. J. Andrea, Philadelphia 1997, p. 93: 'Hardly had he [Alexios] tested the military prowess of our people in a brief battle, when he shamefully turned to flight, distrusting his cause and the cowardice of his compatriots, who he did not deem sufficiently loyal to him because of the disgraceful acts he had committed. Finally, see the subsequent account of Akropolites, who stresses the danger of the situation within the city, p. 6: ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξιος τοῖς τοιούτοις ἀπώκνησε πράγμασι, μάλιστα δὲ γε ἀπείρηκε τοῖς ἐντὸς σύγχυσιν ἀποβλέπουσι καὶ νοσοῦσι τὸ ἄστατον, τὰ πάντα χαίρειν ἔασας φυγῇ ἐχρήσατο ἐκὼν ἀέκοντι γε θυμῷ, τοῦτο δὴ προσειπὼν, ὡς οἱ ἀκηκοότες ἔφασκον, τὸ Δαβὶδ φυγὼν ἐσώθη, προσειπαγόμενος τε καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ χρήματα τοῦ βασιλικοῦ ταμείου ἱκανά. Although the text of Akropolites was written long after the event, it is significant to note that this particular passage has much in common with Niketas' paraphrast, who draws an analogy between the flight of Alexios III and that of David: καὶ φυγεῖν καὶ μὴ εἰς κίνδυνον ἑαυτὸν ἐκδοῦναι καὶ πειρασμόν, καθὼς ποτὲ καὶ ὁ Δαυὶδ ἐποίησε μετ' ὀλίγων ἀπὸ τῇ Σιών ἐξελθὼν. The similarity between the two accounts can be explained if we assume that Niketas' paraphrast and Akropolites were utilising a manuscript (or a hybrid version) of Niketas that contained this reference, but has not survived to our days. The complicated transmission of the manuscripts of Niketas will be discussed in detail in chapter V. For Alexios' position after 1203 see Robert of Clari, p. 81; Queller & Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 130; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 460-62; N. Oikonomides, 'La Décomposition de l'Empire Byzantine à la veille de 1204 et les origines de l'Empire de Nicée: à propos de la *Partitio Romaniae*', *XVe congrès international d'études byzantines. Rapports et co-rapports*, I, Athens 1976, pp. 14-18.

of 1203 may have looked very different.³⁰⁴ Alexios had the massive protection of the walls, which had never before failed, and the defenders of the city outnumbered the attackers by three to one. That the pitifully small crusader force could take the city by storm was probably not even considered a possibility.³⁰⁵

After 1204 the remote possibility became harsh reality and in attempting to explain the chain of disastrous events that led to the capture of the city in version a, Niketas lays the bulk of the blame on the Roman Emperor; an explanation that leaves much to be desired. In all, from the above discussion it is clear that when Niketas was composing version b, he manipulated events in order to present the reign of Alexios in a positive light. On the other hand, it is also evident that in composing version a, the historian was in effect producing an invective against Alexios and his regime – as he in effect admits.³⁰⁶ If version b manifests unmistakable signs of imperial patronage, version a cannot escape the conclusion that the corrupt empire of Alexios III Komnenos was destined to fall.

In conclusion, a comparison of the two versions of the text has demonstrated that Niketas' own circumstances and the purpose of his undertaking at each distinctive phase of the composition was the single most important factor in the treatment of his subject matter – the Emperor of the Romans. We have seen how the author repeatedly either suppresses or distorts information that could reflect negatively on his patron Alexios III and the imperial family of the Komnenoi. However, even in the b-text one can perceive the restlessness of the writer, who dared criticism, at times veiling it under puzzling rhetorical constructions, fictitious speeches, and even silence. Version b is by no means an unreserved eulogy on Alexios III and the Komnenoi. The reader is not here faced with a typical product of a court chronicler, like for example Michael Psellos' encomiastic portrait of Michael VII Doukas in his *Chronographia*, or Michael Attaleiates' representation of Nikephoros III Botaneiates and Anna Komnene's eulogy of her father, Alexios I Komnenos.

³⁰⁴ Niketas' allegation of lack of defensive preparations is not supported by western sources. See letter of crusader leaders to Innocent III dated to August 1203: *Register* 6:210 (211): 'But we had not arrived unexpectedly. We discovered in the city up to 60,000 knights in addition to infantry'.

³⁰⁵ Queller & Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 107-08.

³⁰⁶ Nik.Chon., p.483/45-46: ἵν' οὖν τὰ πλείω παραγκωνίσωμαι, μή πως καταγορεύων ἁλῶ καὶ εἰς ψόγον τὴν ἱστορίαν διατιθέμενος.

On the other hand, version a, and especially Niketas' discussion of the reign of Alexios III is clearly a diatribe against the emperor and in no way can it be argued that it represents a complete and accurate picture of the reign. The same holds true for Niketas' portrait of the weak and incompetent Isaakios II, the bloodthirsty and negligent Andronikos I, and the spendthrift and obsessive Manuel I Komnenos. This does not, of course, mean that these particular emperors were faultless. It means that Niketas was always at pains to emphasize the negative aspects of the reigns. Although a wealth of new and significant information is included in the revised text, the bulk of it focuses on the detrimental results of imperial policies and includes large sections dedicated to the character faults of the respective emperors. Yet whatever the criticism, the point is always to make these particular individuals look incompetent. For our historian the emperor was the starting point of the decline, from which all else followed. As we shall see in the following section, his severe criticism of prominent government officials, which in a sense complements his portrayal of the emperors, induces in the reader an overall feeling or atmosphere of progressive deterioration and decadence, which led to the fall of Byzantium in 1204.

PART THREE: THE ADMINISTRATORS OF THE BASILEIA

Niketas divided the Byzantine administrative machine into three sectors: 'those far-famed because of their blood ties to the emperor, those senators who direct the civil offices and those who hold illustrious dignities and are renowned because they enjoy imperial favour'.³⁰⁷ It is well known that through the far-reaching administrative reforms of Alexios I Komnenos, the Byzantine government in its military and civil branches became a close-knit unit of a group of interconnected families that centred round the imperial family of the Komnenoi.³⁰⁸ In his analysis of the dominant classes in Byzantium in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Alexander Kazhdan estimated that at around the middle of the twelfth century, the Komnenoi constituted an overwhelming majority of the elite class of Byzantium, defined mostly by its share of political power.³⁰⁹ For our purposes, it is significant to note that the numerical superiority of the 'clan' of the Komnenoi in positions of power was retained right up to the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204.³¹⁰

In Niketas' own account, the aristocratic families which appear to dominate the political landscape of Byzantium are the Komnenoi, the Angeloi, the Doukai, the Kontostephanoi, the Kamateroi, the Kantakouzenoi, and to a lesser extent the Palaiologoi and the Vatatzes.³¹¹ These families were all connected to the

³⁰⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 158/72-75: οἱ καθ' αἷμα τῷ βασιλεῖ περιώνυμοι καὶ ὅσοι γερουσιάζοντες τὰς πολιτικὰς διεῖπον ἀρχὰς καὶ οἱ λαμπροὶ τοῖς ἀξιώμασι καὶ τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως εὐνοίᾳ περίκλυτοι.

³⁰⁸ See articles of L. Stiernon: 'Notes de titulature et de prosopographie Byzantines', 1-5: 'Constantin Ange(pan)sébastohypertate', *REB* 19 (1961), pp. 273-83; 'Adrien (Jean) et Constantin Comnène, sébastes', *REB* 21 (1963), pp. 179-98; 'À propos de trois membres de la famille Rogérios (XIIe siècle)', *REB* 22 (1964), pp. 184-98; 'Sébaste et gambros', *REB* 23 (1965), pp. 222-43; 'Théodora Comnène et Andronic Lapardas, sébastes', *REB* 24 (1966), pp. 89-96.

³⁰⁹ I. Sorlin, 'La structure de la classe dominante à byzance aux XI^e et XII^e siècles' compte rendu (A. P. Kazdan, *Social' nyj sostav gospodstvujuscego klassa Vintantii XI-XII vv.*, Moscow 1974), *TM* 6 (1976), p. 374; Now in Italian translation: A. P. Kazhdan & S. Ronchey, *L' aristocrazia bizantina dal principio dell' XI alla fine del XII secolo*, Palermo 1997. In addition see: A. Hohlweg, *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des Oströmischen Reiches unter den Komnenen*, Munich 1965, pp. 15-34; N. Oikonomides, 'L' evolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantin au XIe siècle (1025-1118)', *TM* 6 (1976), pp. 126-52.

³¹⁰ Kazhdan & Ronchey, *Aristocrazia bizantina*, pp. 146-52.

³¹¹ For the prosopographical studies on these families see the exhaustive bibliography of Kazhdan & Ronchey, *Aristocrazia bizantina*, pp. 199-220. More specifically for the Angeloi: G. Ostrogorsky, *Zur Byzantinischen Geschichte*, Darmstadt 1973, pp. 166-82; *ΕΠΛΒΙΠ* I, pp. 82-85; the Doukai: Polemis, *The Doukai*; the Kontostephanoi: H. Grégoire, 'Notes épigraphiques, XIII: La famille de Kontostéphanos et le monastère d' Elegmi', *Revue d' instruction publique de Belgique* 52 (1909), pp. 152-62; the Kamateroi: G. Stadtmüller, 'Zur Geschichte der Familie Kamateros', *BZ* 34 (1934), pp. 352-58; the Kantakouzenoi: Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos*; the Palaiologoi: V. Laurent, 'La généalogie des premiers Paléologues', *Byz* 8 (1933), pp. 125-49 and J. C. Cheynet & J. F. Vannier, *Études prosopographiques*, Paris 1986, pp. 123-87; the Vatatzes: K. I. Amantos, 'H

Komnenoi/Angeloi and indeed to each other by a complex web of familial alliances contracted through marriage and monopolised control of the highest civil, ecclesiastical and military offices of the state.

However, the elite class of Byzantium did not constitute a homogeneous group. There were differences in origin, level of prestige, official function and social role. The divisions used by Niketas himself make a distinction among the traditional senatorial class linked to civil branch of the administration, the relatives of the emperor and those dignitaries who enjoyed imperial favour. In other words, Niketas distinguished between the power wielded by the senate, or more correctly by those who held high posts in the civil bureaucracy, and the power wielded by those close to the emperor.³¹² Modern historians have utilised the more clearly defined categorisation of civil and military branches of the administration. This categorisation is itself implicit in the work of Niketas who draws a distinct line of separation between those who served the state in a military capacity and those who were civil officials.

The historian shows respect and admiration for talented military commanders foremost from the ranks of the Kontostephanoi, but also from the Palaiologoi, the Kantakouzenoi and others.³¹³ He singles out certain individuals for their military capabilities and valour on the battlefield, John II Komnenos, Frederick Barbarossa, Andronikos Kontostephanos and Conrad of Montferrat being the most obvious examples.³¹⁴ Niketas' portrait of the emperor John II Komnenos, the 'crowning glory of the Komnenian dynasty' is that of a valiant and altruistic military leader.³¹⁵ One of the principal heroes of his story is the gallant *strategos* Andronikos Kontostephanos, who is even attributed with a set of lengthy heroic speeches of exhortation.³¹⁶ The chivalrous and pious German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa is presented in a most

οἰκογένεια Βατάτζη', *ΕΕΒΣ* 21 (1951), pp. 174-78 and J. S. Langdon, 'Background to the Rise of the Vatatzai to Prominence in the Byzantine Oikoumene, 997-1222, in *Τὸ Ἑλληνικόν. Studies in Honor of S. Vryonis*, I, New Rochelle NY, 1993, pp. 179-207.

³¹² As has been pointed out by Paul Magdalino, Niketas' concept of nobility applied to those who combined Komnenian lineage with high office and kinship or 'familiarity' with the reigning emperor: P. Magdalino, 'Byzantine Snobbery', in M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XII Centuries*, Oxford 1984, p. 64.

³¹³ Kazhdan, Introduction to *Narrazione cronologica*, p. XXIX. For the 'militarization' of the imperial and aristocratic image in the eleventh and twelfth centuries see: Idem, 'The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal', in *Byzantine Aristocracy*, pp. 43-57.

³¹⁴ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 13.

³¹⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 4-47.

³¹⁶ Nik.Chon., pp. 154/58-155/90, 164/62-166/24.

positive light,³¹⁷ and the courageous and undaunted Conrad of Montferrat saves Constantinople from the clutches of tyranny.³¹⁸ This can be more easily understood if we take into account that the ideological shifts of the eleventh and twelfth century reflected new virtues introduced into the social and imperial ideal: noble origin and military prowess.³¹⁹ Only one group in Byzantine society combined these values, the high-ranking military commanders who were related to the imperial family.

In contrast, Niketas displays a characteristic disdain for his own circle of civil servants and views the entire mechanism of the administration as corrupt and decadent. His account is imbued with the notion of 'fickle fortune' and the instability of political power, as court rivals attempt to outstrip each other in order to gain the favour of the emperor. The cases of Theodore Styppeiotes and John Kamateros in the mid twelfth century, Basil Kamateros, Andronikos Kontostephanos and Constantine Mesopotamites in the late twelfth are typical examples. Although Niketas' preference could simply be of a personal nature, it is unlikely that he was not influenced by the social values of his time. For one, it seems that our historian's distaste for civil servants was shared by other Byzantine and Latin writers of the same period, who narrated court affairs in the turbulent twelfth century.³²⁰ This phenomenon simply underscores the insecurity fostered by a system in which entry into the court depended on kinship or marital affinity with someone already there, and advancement depended on the whim of the emperor.³²¹

As useful as the distinction between civil and military officials is, it does not take into account the imperial relative and the imperial favourite.³²² These individuals could belong to either group, a different category altogether, or have no official function. The 'mediator' (μεσάζων) or the 'power behind the throne' (παραδυναστεύων), the equivalent of a prime minister were regular and yet entirely unofficial features of the Komnenian government.³²³ In addition to this, Niketas' account makes it clear that powerful individuals could serve the state in a military,

³¹⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 401/19ff.

³¹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 382/62ff.

³¹⁹ Kazhdan, 'The Imperial Ideal', pp. 51-52.

³²⁰ See discussion in P. Magdalino, 'In search of the Byzantine Courtier: Leo Choïrosphaktes and Constantine Manasses', in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, Washington D.C. 1997, pp. 162-63.

³²¹ A. Kazhdan & M. McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', *Byzantine Court Culture*, pp. 189, 193-94.

³²² See discussion in H.-G. Beck, 'Der byzantinische Ministerpräsident', *BZ* 48 (1955), pp. 309-38.

³²³ Beck, 'Ministerpräsident', pp. 322-27; Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 252-59.

civil or even ecclesiastical capacity. Moreover, they could be empresses, such as the case of Euphrosyne, patriarchs, such as Dositheos, or high-ranking civil officials, such as Constantine Mesopotamites.

In turn, a quick glance at the list of individuals (Appendix I), about whom there is added or altered information in the a-text reveals a characteristic multiplicity in the functions they performed for the state. A significant number of persons were high-ranking civil officials: John Kamateros, *logothetes tou dromou*, John Poutzenos, *prnotarios tou dromou* and Constantine Mesopotamites, *epi tou kanikleiou*. Others were military commanders: Andronikos Doukas, Alexios Palaiologos and John Kantakouzenos. Finally, imperial relatives with or without official function are also conspicuous: Theodore Kastamonites, uncle of Isaakios II, Andronikos Kontostephanos, son-in-law of Alexios III, and Basil Kamateros, brother-in-law of Alexios III. It is clear that what these individuals had in common was a share or stake in political power. More remarkable, however, is the observation that the majority were related to the imperial family and were politically active during the reign of Alexios III Angelos.

Niketas' cautious treatment of these individuals in the b-text is obviously connected to the time of composition of the original draft of the *Historia*, and it appears that in the same way the historian attempted to uphold the reputation of the imperial family, so he did the same with their administrators and favourites. It is also important to note that the author himself depended on the favour of certain powerful individuals of the age, as we know through his correspondence. It is not surprising that the supplementary information relating to these persons in version a is of a critical nature. As Niketas' criticised the policies and personalities of individual emperors, so he criticised all those who wielded political power. His aim was to highlight the political errors and character faults of these individuals and ultimately, to hold them responsible for the collapse of Byzantium. His treatment of the Kamateroi is a case in point.

The Kamateroi

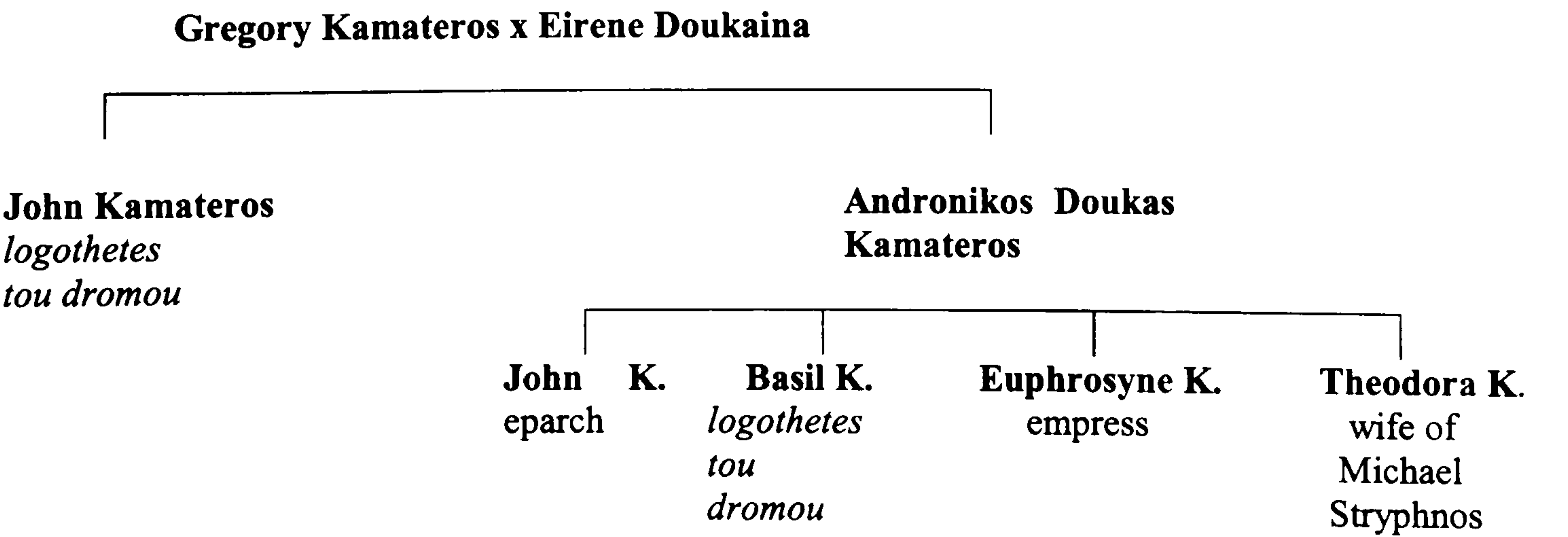
The Kamateroi were the most powerful and pre-eminent bureaucratic family of the second half of the twelfth century. An Andronikos Kamateros had been both *eparch* and *megas droungarios* under Manuel Komnenos. His brother John served the

same emperor as *logothetes tou dromou*. Two Kamateroi were patriarchs: Basil II (1183-86) and John X (1198-1200). Another John Kamateros, who was *epi tou kanikleiou*, became archbishop of Bulgaria after 1183. Finally, a Basil Kamateros (his official function is unknown) was a most influential figure under the emperors Alexios III and Theodore I mainly because his sister, Euphrosyne Kamatere, was the reigning empress of Byzantium in the years 1195-1203.³²⁴

It is therefore only natural that this distinguished group of individuals occupy a central position in Niketas' account. Moreover, the historian, who was himself one of the highest officials in the administration of the Angeloi and spent the better part of his life in the bureaucratic circles of the empire, allots a considerable amount of space to such government officials, recording various details relating to their careers and lives, while accentuating the rivalries and hidden intrigues inherent in Byzantine officialdom. It has already been noted that Niketas' portrayal of the Kamateroi is for the most part unflattering.³²⁵ This is hardly unexpected when we take into account that bureaucrats, who were perpetually plotting against their rivals at court and avariciously grasping for more wealth, are generally treated by Niketas with disapproval.

This disapproval, however, becomes curious, when we consider the cordial relations that existed between the Kamateroi and both the Choniates brothers, who

³²⁴ The family appears in Byzantine sources from the ninth century onwards. An Eirene Doukaina (niece of the homonymous empress of Alexios Komnenos) married a Gregory Kamateros, giving rise to the distinguished branch of the Doukai-Kamateroi, whose members occupied the highest offices in state and church and contracted marital ties with the imperial house and other noble families. See in general *ODB* 2, p. 1098; Stadtmüller, 'Familie Kamateros', pp. 352-58; V. Laurent, 'Un sceau inédit du pronotaire Basile Kamatéros', *Byz* 34 (1934), pp. 352-58. The following genealogical table is taken from Varzos, I, pp. 536-37.



³²⁵ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 255-56.

addressed several letters to them in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.³²⁶ This anomaly is more pronounced when we compare Niketas' treatment of several members of the family in the versions of his history, where a characteristic silence on the part of the author defines the b-text, while an obvious attempt at denigration is apparent in the a-text. Let us take for example the first Kamateros who appears in the *Historia*, Gregory,³²⁷ *logothetes ton sekreton* under John II Komnenos (9/16-22):

A certain Gregory, a learned man, had been employed by emperor Alexios and enrolled among the undersecretaries. He then became connected to the emperor, having wed one of his kinswomen and was promoted to *logothetes ton sekreton* (=Hb).³²⁸

A certain Gregory, whose surname was Kamateros, a learned man, although not descended from a very distinguished or noble family, had been employed by Emperor Alexios and enrolled among the undersecretaries. He went around the provinces and amassed great wealth from the collection of taxes. He longed to be connected to the emperor through marriage, and when he wed one of his [the emperor's] kinswomen, he was promoted to *logothetes ton sekreton* (=VAP)

Here we can take notice of the following: in version b, Niketas passes over the fact that Gregory was a Kamateros and does not discuss how he came into prominence, i.e. through the accumulation of tax funds. In version a, he adds a derogatory remark concerning the lineage of the Kamateroi and suggests that Gregory was promoted to *logothetes ton sekreton* only because he had married into the imperial family.

³²⁶ Three of Niketas' letters (all written during the Nicaean period) are addressed to the *logothetes* Basil Kamateros: *Orationes et epistulae*, 2, 7 and 11, pp. 202-03, 209-11, 216. Michael Choniates addressed a speech to the same individual in ca. 1202, I, pp. 312-23. Two of the metropolitan's letters to Basil survive, II, pp. 62-64, 257-61 and also two letters that Michael had written to the Patriarch Basil Kamateros, II, pp. 39-40, 46-47.

³²⁷ For Gregory see Guiland, 'Les Logothètes', pp. 82-83. For his marriage to Eirene Doukaina see Polemis, *The Doukai*, pp. 78-79. Also B. Skoulatos, *Les personages byzantins de l'Alexiade. Analyse prosopographique et synthèse* (Universite de Laouvain, Recueil de travaux d'histoire et de philologie), Louvain 1980, pp. 109-11.

³²⁸ [...] τις Γρηγόριος ἕτερος, ὁ δ' ἀνὴρ οὗτος λόγιος τῷ βασιλεῖ δὲ προσληφθεὶς Ἀλεξίῳ καὶ τοῖς ὑπογραμματευομένοις καταλεγείς καὶ κατὰ κῆδος αὐτῷ συναφθεὶς ὡς μῖα τῶν ἐκείνου συγγενῶν προσπλακείς λογοθέτης τῶν σεκρέτων προυβέβλητο.

Another member of the family who is presented in a negative light is John Kamateros, *logothetes tou dromou* under Manuel I Komnenos.³²⁹ According to Niketas the downfall of Theodore Styppeiotes, who was *epi tou kanikleiou* and in effect Manuel's chief secretary in the decade of the 1150s, was deviously orchestrated by John Kamateros because of professional rivalry. Yet the name of the antagonist of this affair, which is related in minute detail by Niketas is missing in version b of the text, a conspicuous similarity with the case of Gregory.

111/34 ὁ λογοθέτης τοῦ δρόμου: PWb ὁ λογοθέτης τοῦ δρόμου ὁ Καματηρός
'Ιωάννης: VA

112/63 ὁ δηλωθεὶς λογοθέτης; APWb ὁ Καματηρός: V

113/88 λογοθέτης: Wb Καματηρός: VAP

114/24 ὁ ἀνὴρ: b ὁ Καματηρός: VAPW

In version b the anonymous logothete aroused Manuel's suspicion against Styppeiotes by spreading malicious rumours accusing him of treason, while at the same time feigning friendship and thus gaining the trust of his rival. The logothete's pride was dealt a severe blow when Manuel overlooked him and entrusted Styppeiotes to administer the oaths taken to secure the succession of Alexios-Bela of Hungary and his daughter Maria. He thus planted forged letters of correspondence between Styppeiotes and Manuel's archrival, the King of Sicily, in Styppeiotes' documents. When they were discovered Styppeiotes was charged with treason and blinded.³³⁰ The story remains essentially the same in a, with the significant difference that the logothete's name is disclosed. But this is not all, for in order to demonstrate the malicious character of this individual in version a, Niketas describes him as a licentious dancer, an insolent drunk and a glutton who had a particular passion for green beans. He even adds a picturesque anecdote: Kamateros was once encamped at a riverside where he suddenly noticed a field of beans on the other side. At once the obsessed minister jumped into the river, swam across and lifting the beans onto his shoulders swam back and sat in front of his tent, devouring the beans as though he had never before eaten.³³¹

³²⁹ See Guiland, 'Les Logothètes', pp. 59-61.

³³⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 112/50.

³³¹ Nik.Chon., pp. 114-15/29-38 om. Wb.

Much ink has been spilled over the validity of Niketas' version of Styppeiotes' downfall. The episode is most problematic since Kinnamos, our other major source offers a completely different version of events,³³² and to complicate matters even further, so does the continuator of Otto of Freising's *Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*.³³³ The principal difference between Niketas and our other sources is that while he defends the innocence of Styppeiotes throughout, both Kinnamos and the Latin chronicler are convinced of Styppeiotes' treason. The whole affair has been investigated by Otto Kresten, who concluded that Niketas must have confused John Kamateros, *logothetes tou dromou* with another John Kamateros, *epi tou kanikleiou* in the mid 1160s and altered the facts to fit this mistaken identity.³³⁴ Paul Magdalino challenged this view on the grounds that Niketas could not have been so ignorant of the prosopography of the Kamateroi so as to confuse them, and reluctantly gave Niketas the benefit of the doubt.³³⁵ Finally, Michael Angold, pointing to the international fame of the affair, concluded that it must have involved much more than the petty jealousy of a court official.³³⁶

In the absence of corroboratory evidence, we cannot arrive at a satisfactory explanation. What we can do, however, is speculate that Niketas reached his own version of events through the 'gossip' circulated by bureaucratic officials, possibly competitors of the Kamateroi, in the late 1190s. By this time, more than forty years had passed and it was only natural that different stories were bruited about. Niketas no doubt believed in the culpability of Kamateros, otherwise he would not have included it in his history. In order to evade criticism and possible attack from the powerful Kamateros 'faction' at court, he simply omitted the name of the antagonist.

Niketas' silence in version b concerning the role of another Kamateros in the murder of the young sovereign Alexios II is telling. In the b-text the historian testifies that the body of Alexios was placed in a coffer and cast into the sea. In the a-text, the murder of Alexios furnishes the historian with the perfect opportunity to attack the

³³² Kinnamos, p. 184: According to the author, Styppeiotes had prophesied that 'the span of the emperor's life had already measured out' and that the senate should therefore bestow authority on an aged individual to direct the affairs of state as in a democracy. He makes no mention of John Kamateros, and tells us that Styppeiotes' eyes and tongue were removed for this offence.

³³³ The Latin chronicler alleges that Styppeiotes had planned the murder of the emperor, who was away at Antioch. The German empress Bertha-Eirene discovered the conspiracy and had Styppeiotes arrested: Otto of Freising, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*, trans. C. C. Mierow, Toronto 1953, pp. 227-28.

³³⁴ O. Kresten, 'Zum Sturz des Theodoros Styppeiotes', *JÖB* 27 (1978), pp. 49-103.

³³⁵ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 255-56.

³³⁶ Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, pp. 255-56.

Kamateroi. Thus in version a, he adds the significant and damaging detail that the fishing boat that carried the body of the murdered Alexios was accompanied by two illustrious men: the *chartoularios* Theodore Choumnos and John Kamateros, *epi tou kanikleiou* and later archbishop of Bulgaria.³³⁷ Our historian is equally silent regarding the support offered to Andronikos' tyrannical regime by the patriarch Basil II Kamateros (1183-86) in the b-text, where it is merely stated that Andronikos selected Basil to become the new patriarch. In the a-text, Niketas supplies us with the reason for Basil's nomination – the patriarch was the only one who had agreed in writing to do whatever was pleasing to Andronikos.³³⁸ Again, when Andronikos requested from Basil to release him from the oath he had sworn to Emperor Manuel (to honour and protect the young Alexios' right to the throne), Niketas simply mentions the petition as such in version b.³³⁹ In a, Andronikos 'requested a second favour from the patriarch who satisfied all his wishes, Basil Kamateros'.³⁴⁰

Niketas' remarks concerning Basil Kamateros are confirmed by Eustathios, who describes Kamateros as 'a man of hot-blooded temperament' who joined Andronikos 'in a fusion of character' and was most capable of adjusting himself to different situations, if it was to his own advantage to do so.³⁴¹ Thus it would appear that Niketas had indeed censured himself by simply discarding any damaging information he had accumulated about the Kamateroi in the b-text, and where he did insert it, as in the case of the *logothetes tou dromou* John Kamateros, he purposely omitted the latter's name.

This is undoubtedly connected to the fact that the Kamateroi dominated Byzantine political and ecclesiastical life in the closing decades of the twelfth century. The epithet 'golden race' by which Michael Choniates refers to them allows us to glimpse at the extraordinary political power this family exercised.³⁴² In addition to this, through the author's correspondence and an unexpected invective speech against a highly prominent member of the family, we learn of the close but at the same time turbulent relations that existed between Niketas and the Kamateroi.

³³⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 274/25-29 om. b.

³³⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 262/1-6 om. b.

³³⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 276/20-21 b: βασιλεύσας δ' Ἀνδρόνικος αἰτεῖται τὸν πατριάρχην Βασίλειον καὶ τὴν τότε σύνοδον λυθῆναι τοῦ ὄρκου.

³⁴⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 276/20-21.

³⁴¹ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 47.

³⁴² Michael Choniates, II, p. 257: χρυσοῦ γένους.

Speech eight in Niketas' surviving collection written ca. 1196-1198 is an invective against the '*chartophylax* of the great church', John Kamateros, later patriarch John X (1198-1206).³⁴³ John Kamateros was not only a prominent ecclesiastical official, but also second cousin to the empress Euphrosyne.³⁴⁴ At around this time (1197-1200), a doctrinal controversy over the Holy Sacraments had enveloped the Byzantine world. The controversy erupted when Michael Glykas (surnamed Sikidites) developed the idea that the elements of the Eucharist as consecrated by a priest are mortal and corruptible, as was Christ's body at the Last Supper when he instituted the sacrament. Although the doctrine was fiercely opposed, it appears to have enjoyed the moderate favour of Patriarch George Xiphilinos (1192-98) and John Kamateros after him.³⁴⁵

According to Niketas, Kamateros composed a slanderous and heretical treatise on the Holy sacraments and accused, Niketas among others, of being the author of such blasphemy.³⁴⁶ Although Niketas and John Kamateros were apparently close friends, the latter did not hesitate to level preposterous accusations against him for the sake of his advancing his own views on the subject, i.e. by condemning the heretical opinions of others and thereby promoting the correctness of his own.³⁴⁷ These included the charge of 'heterodoxy', the questioning of the sources of Niketas'

³⁴³ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 68ff. τοῦ αὐτοῦ λόγος οὗ ἡ μὲν ὑπόθεσις δῆλη τοῦτο δὲ δεῖ εἰδέναι τὸν ἀναγιγνώσκοντα, ὡς ἦν χαρτοφύλαξ τῆς μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας ὁ καθ' οὗ ἐρρέθη καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς παραβλῶψ. καὶ ἄλλοις δὲ τισι προσσχεῖν χρεῶν, ἃ ὁ λόγος ἐμφαίνει, εἰ καὶ μὴ σαφῶς. For the dating of the speech and the identification of the *chartophylax* with John Kamateros, see van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 106-115. See also: F. Grabler, *Kaisertaten und Menschenschicksale* (Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber XI), Graz 1966, no. 8, pp. 123-48; M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261*, Cambridge 1995, p. 129.

³⁴⁴ For John Kamateros see A. Palmieri, *DTC* 2.2, col. 1433; *ODB* 2, pp. 1054-55; Georges et Dèmétrios Tornikès, pp. 45-47; Varzos, II, p. 767.

³⁴⁵ *Panoplia Dogmatike*, (ed. Eustratiades), pp. κα' - κβ'. See M. Jugie, 'La Messe dans l'Eglise Byzantine après le XI^e siècle', *DTC* 10.2, col. 1339-43; H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, Munich 1959, pp. 654-55; H. Magoulas, 'Doctrinal Disputes in the History of Niketas Choniates', *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 6 (1987), pp. 199-226.

³⁴⁶ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 70/4ff: ἀλλὰ πλάσας περὶ ἡμῶν τὰ ἀνήκουστα καὶ λογοποιήσας τὰ ἀπαράδεκτα κατατρέχεις ὡς οὐκ εὐσεβῶν, λαρυγγίζων δὲ καὶ καταχέων τῶν προσιόντων σοι ληρωδήματα καὶ δόξας ἀλλοτρίας ἀναμετρῶν καὶ τι πονημάτιον ἐμφανίζων τοῖς ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς σοι φαρίας κουφολογιῶν ἀνάμεστον φῆς ἀνερυθριάστως καὶ ἄλλους μὲν αἰτιᾶσθαι σοι τοῦ συγγράμματος, μεθ' ἐτέρων δὲ καὶ ἡμᾶς.

³⁴⁷ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 73, 74/7ff. Niketas maintains that Kamateros had become angry with him for a trivial reason. During the celebrations of the martyr St. George in the Aghia Sophia, Kamateros began to preach about the corrupt nature of the Holy Sacraments. (ἀρξάμενος δὲ θεολογεῖν....περὶ τῶν ἀχράντων καὶ ἀκηράτων μυστηρίων Χριστοῦ φθαρτά τε ἀπεκάλει ταῦτα καὶ ἄψυχα καὶ ἄνοα καὶ νεκρά...p. 71/23-27). Niketas spoke out against him, insisting that he be silent and refrain from preaching on theology (παῦσαι, ὦ καλέ· εἰρήκειμεν' δέσποτα. τί τοῦ μάρτυρος ἑορτῇ, ἐφ' ἣν συνεδράζομεν, καὶ τοῖς πρὸς οὐδενὰ τὸν ἀνθιστάμενον σεμνοῖς σου διαλόγους καὶ νεαροκλέσι θεολογήμασι; p.72/5-8). Kamateros was offended that Niketas publicly spoke out against his views and decided to avenge himself by publishing a slanderous document against Niketas.

wealth, and even the allegation that our historian possessed some sort of ‘demonic’ power.³⁴⁸ Niketas responded by demonstrating the falseness of the charges and further illustrating that it was the accuser himself who held ‘heterodox’ opinions.³⁴⁹ Although the speech does not provide us with any historical background, it appears that while Kamateros had publicly demonstrated his support of the new doctrine, Niketas had publicly condemned it. This much is clear from Kamateros’ own statement to Niketas: ‘and you...belong to that faction that is against me concerning my views on Christ’s sacraments and in no way can you be counted among my supporters.’³⁵⁰

In the *Historia*, Niketas’ treatment of the ‘sycophant’ Kamateros, is of special interest. In his account of the doctrinal controversy, Niketas does not even hint at his own personal involvement, but in both versions of the text indirectly criticises Kamateros for mishandling the situation and resorting to dialectical tricks in order to avoid public condemnation.³⁵¹ What is of particular importance for us is that in version b, Niketas’ treatment is longer and more detailed. The episode ends with the following lines, which clearly allude to the strife that had broken out between himself and Kamateros (517/4: add. b):

Certain of those who held this ‘corrupt’ belief composed unsound arguments with certain propositions supposedly set forth by the opposing side, while [in truth] they themselves had fabricated them. By cancelling these with great ease, they believed that they would strengthen their own beliefs. This was the proposition of the plotter, who whispered lies in the ears of Eve so as to lead her away more easily.³⁵²

These closing remarks were removed from the final version. We can imagine that at the time Niketas was composing the original text the whole affair was still fairly recent. In the spring of 1200, a council was held where Alexios III declined to make any condemnations for heresy, but instead imposed silence on both parties. This perhaps reflects the extremely delicate nature of the situation in which a ‘heterodox’

³⁴⁸ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 72-76.

³⁴⁹ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 73-74.

³⁵⁰ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 72/14-15: καὶ σύ, φησί, τῆς μερίδος τῶν ἀντιδοξούντων μοι ἐν οἷς φημι περὶ τῶν Χριστοῦ μυστηρίων, οὐτὲ συναριθμῇ τοῖς περὶ ἐμοῦ.

³⁵¹ Nik.Chon., p. 514/38-56.

³⁵² τινὲς δὲ τῶν τῆς φθαρτοδοξίας ταύτης διαλόγους ξυνθέμενοι σαθράς τινας προτάσεις προυβάλλοντο παρὰ τοῦ δῆδεν ἀντιθέτου μέρους προτειναμένους, αὐτοὶ πλασάμενοι ταύτας. ὅθεν καὶ μάλα εὐμαρῶς ἀναλύοντες τὴν οἰκεῖαν ἐπικρατύνειν ᾤοντο δόξαν τοῦ Πονηροῦ καὶ τοῦτο εἰσήγημα, ὅς κατεψευσμένα ἐς οὐς τῇ προμήτορι ψιθυρίσας ὡς ἀπαλωτέραν αὐτὴν ὑπηγάγετο.

doctrine enjoyed the support of a number of very influential figures and relatives of the imperial family. This much is, at least, evident in Niketas' detailed discussion of the controversy in the *Panoplia Dogmatike*, where he not only openly states that Kamateros was a follower of Sikidites, but also criticises him: 'exulting in his relation with the empress and pursuing the cause of the men of that time...he took no heed of any of the established doctrines.'³⁵³ When we come round to the time Niketas was composing version a, the *Panoplia Dogmatike* had already been 'published' and thus there was no reason for the author to discuss the affair in detail in his history. Besides, the emphasis of the work had been radically transformed; what had seemed important in ca. 1200 was but a petty and trifling incident after 1204.³⁵⁴

Niketas was closely connected to another member of the Kamateros family, Basil, the brother of empress Euphrosyne.³⁵⁵ Though his correspondence we are led to believe that Basil had been rather influential in ensuring Niketas' professional status both in the court of Alexios III and later in that of Theodore Laskaris. In a letter written to Basil during Niketas' sojourn in Nicaea, he writes:

In our former prosperity we followed the great men closely. From among those who we knew rejoiced in rhetoric and learning and who awarded the just man his share, you know that you were the most excellent and most powerful. Now that we have been humbled and reduced in everything by the most accursed western nations and we have no city, no nourishment, nor anything else that men deem necessary, we have not until now attached ourselves to any of those who are opposed to virtue, but we again approach you; clinging to you in the manner of an ivy-grove because of all the beneficial things that you have done for us in the past, having displayed many times that you could relieve our sorrow by administering remedies. And not least because of your experience and wisdom and your genuine friendship and good-natured soul.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ *Panoplia Dogmatike*, (ed. Eustratiades), p. κζ': ὁ δὲ γε πατριάρχης τῇ τῆς βασιλίδος συγγενείᾳ κυδρούμενος καὶ τὸν λόγιον ὑπὲρ τοὺς τότε θηρώμενος...κατ' οὐδὲν τῶν κυρωθέντων ἐφρόντιζεν. See discussion in van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 110-11.

³⁵⁴ van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 113.

³⁵⁵ Guillard, 'Les Logothètes', pp. 62-63; Polemis, *The Doukai*, p. 130.

³⁵⁶ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 209/20-30: ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ πρότερον ἐν τῇ εὐθηνίᾳ ἡμῶν βραχέσιν ἐκ τῶν μεγιστάνων τὸν νοῦν προσείχομεν καὶ τοῦτων, οὓς ἤδειμεν λόγῳ καὶ παιδείᾳ χαίροντας καὶ τῷ δικαίῳ μερίδα βραβεύοντας, ὧν ὁ κράτιστος ἅμα καὶ βέλτιστος ἦσθα σὺ καὶ οὐχ ἕτερος· καὶ νῦν δὲ ταπεινωθέντες καὶ πάντων ἐκπεσόντες ὑπὸ τῶν καταρατοτάτων ἐσπερίων ἐθνῶν καὶ μήτε πόλιν μήθ' ἐστίαν μήτε τι τῶν ἄλλων ἔχοντες, ὧν ἀπαραιτήτως χρήζουσιν ἄνθρωποι, οὐδενὶ προσηρμόσθημεν ἐς δεῦρο τῶν ἐναντίως ἐχόντων πρὸς ἀρετὴν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάλιν σοὶ πρόσμιεν καὶ σοῦ μόνου δίκην κιντῶν ἐξεχόμεθα καὶ δι' ὅσα μὲν εὖ ποιεῖν ἡμᾶς προὔθου πολλάκις λαθικηδὴ μετιῶν φάρμακα, οὐκ ἔλαττον δὲ διὰ τὴν σὴν ἐμπειρίαν καὶ φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν ἄδολον φιλίαν καὶ τὴν χρηστοθήτη ψυχὴν.

In the same letter Niketas complains about the ill treatment he received at the hands of his employer, the *protovestiarios* (perhaps John Vatatzes),³⁵⁷ who neglected to provide him with his due earnings. He entreats Basil to use his influence to compel the *protovestiarios* to honour the promises he had made to Niketas, who claims that he is now on the brink of starvation.³⁵⁸ In yet another letter to Basil, written again during the Nicaean period, Niketas reminds Kamateros of a petition he had formerly made to him, which at that point had not yet been granted.³⁵⁹ A final letter written after 1213 served as a cover letter of a revision of book 17 of the *Panoplia Dogmatike* dealing with the heresy of the Armenians, which Niketas had sent to Basil (for the latter's approval?). Niketas here excuses himself from the task of accompanying Kamateros on his journey to escort Theodore Laskaris' future bride, the daughter of Levounios of Cilician Armenia, to Nicaea.³⁶⁰

It is thus apparent that Niketas not only maintained close relations with Basil, but was probably dependent upon him for his own livelihood. This sort of patronage of literati or civil servants was certainly widespread throughout the Komnenian period.³⁶¹ Consequently, it comes as no great surprise to learn that Niketas had omitted any harmful information on this most influential figure in version b of the text. In fact, Basil is hardly mentioned at all. He appears only once in the b-text in 1183 as *logothetes tou dromou* and co-conspirator of Andronikos Angelos and the *megasdux* Andronikos Kontostephanos against Andronikos I Komnenos. The plot was uncovered and Kontostephanos, along with his four sons, and Basil were blinded.³⁶² From other sources we learn that Basil was banished to Russia, but returned to carve himself a lucrative career under the Angeloi.³⁶³ In Nicaea, Basil

³⁵⁷ The unnamed *protovestiarios* can perhaps be identified with John Vatatzes, later emperor (1222-1254). According to Akropolites (p. 26/10ff.), after the death of the *despotes* Andronikos Palaiologos, John Doukas Vatatzes was summoned from Didymoteichon to Nicaea, where Theodore Laskaris awarded him with the office of *protovestiarios*. Niketas says that as soon as the *protovestiarios* arrived in Nicaea, he (Niketas) was taken into his service, performing whatever duties the *protovestiarios* requested. See van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 178.

³⁵⁸ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 211.

³⁵⁹ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 202-03.

³⁶⁰ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 216-17; F. Cavallera, 'Le Trésor de la Foi Orthodoxe de Nicéas Acominatos Choniate', *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique publié par l'Institut de Toulouse* 5 (1913), pp. 124-37; van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 182-86.

³⁶¹ See M. Mullett, 'Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary circles of Comnenian Constantinople', *Byzantine Aristocracy*, pp. 173-201; Kazhdan & McCormick, 'Byzantine Court', pp. 167-97; Magdalino, 'Byzantine Courtier', pp. 141-65.

³⁶² Nik.Chon., pp. 266/30-267/41. Also in Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 40; Michael Choniates, I, 320-21. See Cognasso, 'Partiti politici', p. 263; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, p. 46; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, p. 114.

³⁶³ Michael Choniates, I, pp. 320-21.

became 'the power behind the throne' of Theodore Laskaris.³⁶⁴ Yet Niketas remains silent.

In the a-text, however, Basil appears as one of the accusers of his own sister, the empress Euphrosyne, charged with adultery in October 1197 and banished from the palace for six months. Niketas, who is our only source for this incident, omits it altogether in version b.³⁶⁵ In version a, he provides us with a graphic account of the episode, which even includes a speech attributed to Euphrosyne's enemies, Andronikos Kontostephanos³⁶⁶ and Basil Kamateros. According to the historian, Andronikos and Basil were enraged when the empress promoted one their rivals, Constantine Mesopotamites to a position of supreme administrative authority, *epi tou kanikleiou*. As a result Andronikos and Basil had fallen from imperial favour. They thus decided to avenge themselves on the instigator of the evil, the empress. Bringing a charge of adultery against her, they urged the emperor to deprive Euprosyne of all her power and wealth, lest she attempt to place her lover, a young officer by the name of Vatatzes, on the throne. In addition, they advised the emperor to dispose of his potential rival.³⁶⁷

Contrary to their wishes, Alexios drastically overreacted to the accusation and ordered the empress' removal from the palace, although it should be noted that Mesopotamites retained his position. Thus says Niketas, the whole affair greatly tarnished the reputation of the government and the accusers were forthwith taunted and reproached by the populace for bringing disgrace upon their own family. Most likely bowing to popular pressure, they once more orchestrated Euphrosyne's return to power after a six-month exile (October-March 1197).³⁶⁸ It is obvious why Niketas would have omitted such an embarrassing episode in the b-text. For lack of corroborative evidence, we must perforce take him at his word in the a-text, although he never explains why Andronikos and Basil did not attack Mesopotamites directly, or why they specifically chose to cast Vatatzes in the role of the lover and request his immediate death. Besides, Mesopotamites, the supposed object of their discontent and the reason why they devised the whole scheme in the first place, was hardly affected.

³⁶⁴ Michael Choniates, II, p. 258; M. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea (1204-1261)*, Oxford 1975, p. 149.

³⁶⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 483/35-493/66 om. b.

³⁶⁶ As Niketas tells us, Andronikos was the husband of Euphrosyne's daughter Eirene.

³⁶⁷ Nik.Chon., pp. 485-86. For a discussion of this incident see: Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 144-45; Varzos, II, pp. 780-83; Garland, 'Morality versus Politics', pp. 289-92.

³⁶⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 484/41ff.; Garland, 'Morality versus Politics', p. 291.

Niketas, moreover, never refutes the charges of adultery. On the contrary, although he expresses his disapproval of Alexios' handling of the incident, he does state that the emperor ascertained the precise details of the affair from the eunuchs of the bedchamber.³⁶⁹ Whatever the case, we believe that the entire episode perhaps involved much more than the mere envy of Andronikos and Basil for Mesopotamites' good fortune.

In conclusion, it is clear that the historian is quite cautious of his treatment of the family throughout the b-text; omitting their names in unfavourable circumstances or simply passing over certain episodes completely. His own dependence on Basil Kamateros and the latter's influence over both Alexios III and Theodore Laskaris in all likelihood constrained his freedom of speech. His continual pleas for assistance to Basil in Nicaea must have further exacerbated the situation, as it appears that they were never fully answered. In all, it is evident that Niketas' treatment of the Kamateroi was heavily influenced by his own personal experiences with members of the family.

Officials, various supporters and relatives of the Komnenian Regime

Although Niketas shows himself to be better informed about the officials of his own time, he does provide us with some poignant characterisations of earlier administrators. During the reign of Manuel Komnenos, a certain John Poutzenos, who had originally been John II's finance minister and held the post of *megas logariastes* at around 1157, is singled out for vehement criticism.³⁷⁰ Niketas holds Poutzenos responsible for one of the most serious policy errors of the Komnenian regime. According to the historian, it was on Poutzenos' bad advice that John Komnenos abolished the measure, which designated that all contributions collected from ship-money levies should be channelled towards the upkeep and maintenance of the fleet. This revenue was, instead, to be diverted to the imperial treasury so as to increase the potential of expenditure afforded to the imperial government. As a result of this

³⁶⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 488/10-13.

³⁷⁰ For this individual see Kresten, 'Zum Sturz', pp. 84-85.

measure, Niketas sadly notes that: 'now...pirates rule the seas and the Roman maritime provinces suffer by piratical vessels so that the adversaries gloat'.³⁷¹

In order to draw attention to the niggardly character of the minister, Niketas supplies us with a host of anecdotal information in the a-text. On one particular occasion, Poutzenos stopped at a market place and because he was suddenly overcome by gluttony, he greedily devoured some cakes sold there by the female vendors, even though a well-prepared meal was awaiting him at home. At another time, Niketas places Poutzenos in the agora, where we can see the minister being ridiculed by nearby street children because he had stopped to pick up a horseshoe, which had been purposely heated and thrown on the road so as to lure his niggardly nature.³⁷² It is clear that the purpose of these seemingly trivial scenes was sheer mockery. However, this mockery was not without purpose. It had the specific aim of emphasizing the worthlessness of the individual under discussion.

Indeed, these scenes are reminiscent of the sort of episodes often narrated by Niketas for the purposes of derision. A primary example is the bizarre scene depicting the obsession of John Kamateros for green beans and it is significant that not even emperors were spared such ridicule; Manuel casting glances at the astrologer present during the birth of his son, Andronikos defecating himself during his coronation, or Isaakios being rocked gently in the manner of a babe in the arms of patriarch Dositheos. The accumulation of such scenes in the a-text suggests that our historian was attempting to create an overall image of folly within the governing circles of the empire. Although Poutzenos is criticised for a grave error of a political nature, the force of the criticism certainly lies in personal belittlement and ridicule.

The cases of Constantine Mesopotamites, the powerful minister of Isaakios II and Alexios III and later metropolitan of Thessaloniki (1196-98-1222/3)³⁷³ and Theodore Eirenikos, who succeeded to Mesopotamites' position and later became

³⁷¹ Nik.Chon., p. 55/18-21. This 'now' in the b-text accords well with the prevailing circumstances at the end of the twelfth century, where Alexios III was forced to contend with outrages of exceptional magnitude committed by Italian pirates all over the Aegean. See the chrysobull of Isaakios II Angelos (November 1192): Dölger-Wirth, *Regesten*, no. 1612 and complaints of Michael Choniates, II, pp. 42, 43, 71-72, 98-99. Discussions in P. Wirth, 'Die Mittelalterliche griechische Inselwelt im Lichte der byzantinischen Kaiserdiplome', *BF* 5 (1977), pp. 415-31; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 211-14; Christophilopoulou, *Βυζαντινή Ιστορία*, pp. 395-98.

³⁷² Nik.Chon., pp. 57/53-58/82 om. Pb.

³⁷³ *ODB* 2, p. 1349; V. Laurent, 'La succession épiscopale de la métropole de Thessalonique dans la première moitié du XIIe siècle', *BZ* 56 (1963), pp. 284-96; Varzos, II, pp. 780-86; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 144-46.

patriarch in exile at Nicaea (1214-16) are similar to that of Poutzenos.³⁷⁴ These individuals, who were Niketas' colleagues in the administration and with whom he often corresponded are noticeably absent from the political scene in version b. Mesopotamites only appears as the unnamed influential youth who assumed the administration of public affairs following the death of Isaakios' maternal uncle Theodore Kastamonites in ca. 1192.³⁷⁵ Only in the a-text do we learn that Mesopotamites assumed such great influence over Isaakios that no one else was even permitted to approach the emperor. In the author's characteristic phrase, 'he was the thick wax that formed in the emperor's auditory canal and blocked the flow of sound from both sides'. The 'aged youth' was greedy, capricious, secretive and crafty, characteristics confirmed according to Niketas by the growth of his eyebrows in a single line without separation. He showed great skill in gathering illegal exactions and was an infamous glutton. Niketas even deems it appropriate to list his favourite foods: cakes and melons.³⁷⁶

Mesopotamites is finally mentioned by name when Niketas comes round to narrating the sequence of events concerning the banishment of empress Euphrosyne from the palace – an episode, which as we have already seen is completely missing from the b-text. Upon concluding his discussion regarding the empress, Niketas takes up the subject of Mesopotamites again, 'for it is necessary to say more on the Proteus of our times'. He was undeserving of the glory he boasted, says Niketas, when he was ordained metropolitan of Thessaloniki, and thus possessed (quite unlawfully) the very summit of power in both state and ecclesiastical spheres. His conceit and haughtiness gained him many enemies at court. These finally succeeded in ousting him from the palace and later in divesting him of all his liturgical privileges.³⁷⁷

Niketas' silence in the b-text can be understood in terms of Mesopotamites' position as well as the personal relationship between the two men. Niketas wrote two letters to Mesopotamites during his period of exile at Nicaea. Letter four, dated by

³⁷⁴ See G. Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates, Metropolit von Athen (ca. 1138-ca. 1222)*, Rome 1934, pp. 249-51.

³⁷⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 439/70. Manuscript D of the b family identifies the youth as Mesopotamites in a marginal note: διὰ τὸν Θεσσαλονίκης Μεσοποταμίτην ταῦτα φησιν.

³⁷⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 440/81-85 altered, 440/85-441/9 om. b.

³⁷⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 489/46-493/62 om. b. On Mesopotamites' great power see the letter of Michael Choniates to Mesopotamites, II, pp. 116-18.

van Dieten to the end of 1206/beginning of 1207 is a sort of consolatory letter,³⁷⁸ much like the others that Niketas and his friends seem to have exchanged after 1204.³⁷⁹ Letter nine, is a brief note, where Niketas asks Mesopotamites to write him so that he can bring him consolation and relief.³⁸⁰ More significant is the identification of Mesopotamites with the owner of manuscript *Laurentianus* IX 24, containing the *Panoplia Dogmatike* and the LO version of the *Historia*. Considering the fact that this codex belongs to the thirteenth century, it is possible that it was sent to Mesopotamites by the author himself. Although there exists no evidence pointing to enmity between the two men, a comparison of the historian's treatment of Mesopotamites in the two versions would indicate that their friendship should be defined in 'political' rather than 'genuine' terms.

Much the same can be observed with Niketas' portrait of Theodore Eirenikos, who appears only in the a-text.³⁸¹ The historian tells us that this individual succeeded to Mesopotamites' position, once the latter had been ousted from the palace. Eirenikos is initially described in flattering terms: he was gracious in manner, skilled in rhetoric and possessed a thorough understanding of governmental affairs.³⁸² He succeeded, according to the historian, in taking complete charge of public affairs (ταῖς πολιτικαῖς ἐπεστάτου πράξεσι) and one wonders whether this was at Niketas' expense, since we are specifically told that Eirenikos prevailed over his competitors by intrigue.³⁸³ More damaging is Niketas' final reference to this individual. Out of fear of losing his own position, the minister refused to carry out the reforms necessary for the state, i.e. to oppose the policies of the emperor and his powerful relatives.³⁸⁴

Niketas wrote two letters to Eirenikos during the Nicaean period. In the letters, he complains bitterly about his ill-treatment at the hands of the 'powerful' in

³⁷⁸ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 206-08: Niketas consoles his 'dearest brother' (φίλτατε ἀδελφέ), who is named as metropolitan of Thessaloniki, in his time of grief. He compares his own troubles in Nicaea with those of Mesopotamites and suggests that they console each other in these hard times by exchanging letters.

³⁷⁹ *Orationes et epistulae*: Letter 5 to Theodore Eireinikos, pp. 206-208. Letter 4 to an anonymous friend, pp. 208-209. Letter 8, again to Theodore Eireinikos, pp. 211-14. Letter 10 to Michael Autoreianos, pp. 214-15.

³⁸⁰ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 214. The letter makes no mention of Nicaea, but Niketas does complain of his miserable situation yet again. See van Dieten, *Biographie*, p. 180.

³⁸¹ For this individual see A. I. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 'Θεόδωρος Εἰρηνικός πατριάρχης οἰκουμενικός', *BZ* 10 (1901), pp. 187-92.

³⁸² Nik.Chon., p. 492/50-53 om. b.

³⁸³ Michael Choniates, II, pp. 121-22.

³⁸⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 493/60-62. Unfortunately Niketas does not tell us what these policies were.

Nicaea, but assures Eirenikos that he will not entreat anyone or resort to feigning the beggar so to arouse people's sympathies.³⁸⁵ Later, he tactfully reminds Eirenikos of his miserable situation in the Bithynian capital and asks him not to believe the vicious rumours that were circulating about him.³⁸⁶ Unfortunately, we are never told what these rumours were. But could it be that Niketas was the victim of yet another court intrigue? Whatever the case, the historian's letters in the post-1204 period reveal that he was let down by powerful friends at Nicaea. It is no coincidence that these very same individuals appear in a negative light in final version of his historical work.

Niketas, however, is not only critical of his own circle of bureaucrats, but extends his criticisms so as to include high-ranking military officials (usually related to the imperial family), whose service to the state appears less than praiseworthy in version a. Here we shall discuss the cases of John Kantakouzenos, Manuel Kamytzes and Michael Stryphnos. The caesar John Kantakouzenos, who was Isaakios II's brother-in-law, had been sent out by this emperor (ca. 1186) against the Vlacho-Bulgarians. In the b-text, Niketas simply states (374/1-376/26 APWb): 'The caesar John Kantakouzenos, the emperor's brother-in-law who was married to his sister, succeeded to the command. He was a man of admirable physique and possessed a wealth of experience in military tactics. But at that time he did not conduct well the war against the Vlachs'.³⁸⁷ In the a-text, we are further told that although Kantakouzenos was an experienced commander, he was rash and arrogant by nature. Niketas then provides us with a detailed account of the tactical errors committed by Kantakouzenos during the campaign as well as his insulting behaviour towards his troops on the battlefield. As a final jest, the historian portrays the blind commander pointing his weapon in the direction of the enemy and urging his troops towards attack, 'even though he could not see that which was under his feet and did not know where the enemy was encamped'. He closes the episode by the familiar *topos* of the comparison made between the wealthy and effeminate Greeks versus the courageous barbarians. When the Romans were put to flight by the Vlachs, the 'soft tunics' and 'elegant cloaks' of the caesar were captured and displayed in the rebel camp for the purposes of mockery and the 'barbarians' occupied the plains waving the Roman

³⁸⁵ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 207.

³⁸⁶ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 213.

³⁸⁷ διαδέχεται δὲ τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ὁ καῖσαρ Ἰωάννης ὁ Καντακουζηνός, γαμβρὸς ὦν τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπ' ἀδελφῇ. ἀνὴρ δ' οὗτος ἀξιοθέατος τὸ εἶδος καὶ πλουτῶν ἐμπειρίαν τῶν τακτικῶν, τότε δὲ οὐ καλῶς τὸν κατὰ Βλάχων διεστρατήγησε πόλεμον.

standards.³⁸⁸ In retrospect, Niketas would often use this cliché to demonstrate a major reason why Byzantium succumbed to the Latins.³⁸⁹

The *protostrator* Manuel Kamytzes³⁹⁰ was first cousin to the Angeloi emperors and one of their most trusted military commanders until his dangerous insurrection in ca. 1201.³⁹¹ In the b-text, this individual is more or less ignored by the historian in a conscious attempt to play down the significance of his rebellion. Before examining this event it is worth taking a brief look at two episodes concerning Kamytzes. When Alexios III took ill in 1199, Niketas tells us in the b-text that ‘those who were related to the emperor by blood were enlisted to seek the crown’.³⁹² In the a-text, he adds that this episode had in fact turned into a contest with Kamytzes and his paternal uncle, the *sebastokrator* John Doukas, competing for the crown.³⁹³ When Kamytzes was captured by the Vlach rebel Ivanko, Niketas alleges that the *protostrator* had fallen into a trap laid by the enemy: ‘[Ivanko] transferred many herds from the mountains to the plains and planned an ambush’. Kamytzes’ troops, oblivious to the ruse, fell upon the unprotected lair and were encircled by the Vlachs.³⁹⁴ In the a-text, Niketas criticises Kamytzes, who in his greediness, led the Byzantine troops straight into the trap. To make the humiliating episode even livelier, he depicts the troops plundering everything in sight, while their commander rode around to inspect the operation.³⁹⁵

Concerning Kamytzes’ insurrection, Niketas offers us a rather bare account in the b-text. He relates that the *protostrator* was released from bondage by the other Vlach rebel, Chrysos. Together they conquered Pelagonia and Prilep, penetrated the Thessalian Tempe and caused great disturbances in Hellas and the Peloponnese.³⁹⁶ Niketas says nothing more on the subject in the b-text. Only in version a does he uncover the motive for the rebellion. According to the historian, the niggardly Alexios III refused to pay the ransom for Kamytzes’ release and instead confiscated the *protostrator*’s immense fortune. Chrysos (who was Kamytzes’ son-in-law)

³⁸⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 374/1-376/26.

³⁸⁹ This idea will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

³⁹⁰ *ODB* 2, pp. 1099-1100; Varzos, II, pp. 690-713; Savvides, ‘Το κίνημα του Μανουήλ Καμ(μ)ύτζη-Καμίτση στη βορειοδυτική Μακεδονία και στη Θεσσαλία στις αρχές του 13^{ου} αιώνα’, *Θεσσαλικό Ημερολόγιο* 12 (1987), pp. 145-57 (repr. Idem, *Μελετήματα Βυζαντινής Προσωπογραφίας και Τοπικής Ιστορίας*, Athens 1992, no. VIII).

³⁹¹ See accounts in Michael Choniates, II, pp. 125-27; Nikephoros Chrysoberges, pp. 1-12.

³⁹² Nik.Chon., p. 498/16-22 b: οἱ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς γένους τῷ βασιλεῖ τοῖς ἐξ ὁσφύος σφίσι τὴν ἀρχὴν ἠνδρολόγουν.

³⁹³ Nik.Chon., p. 498/17-19.

³⁹⁴ Nik.Chon., pp. 512/89-513/14 b.

³⁹⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 512/89-6 om. b and 513/8-9 om. b.

³⁹⁶ Nik.Chon., pp. 533/42-534/62 b.

stepped in to ransom the *protostrator* and in an act of desperation, Kamytzes lashed out against the emperor. The author was undoubtedly aware of this significant detail when he was composing the b-text. In one of his speeches to Alexios III, he denounces Kamytzes for not waiting patiently in bondage for the emperor to release him. Instead, says Niketas, he fermented a treacherous rebellion against his own country.³⁹⁷

Finally, the *megas dux*, Michael Stryphnos, who served both Alexios III and later Theodore I Laskaris in Nicaea, is absent from the b-text but appears in the LO and a versions. Niketas introduces Stryphnos as ‘a pot-bellied man’, unscrupulous by nature and in the habit of devouring the public funds. He also tells us that Stryphnos was the leader of the conspirators who finally succeeded in ousting Constantine Mesopotamites from the palace in 1198.³⁹⁸ Later in the narrative, when news had arrived from the west that the Latin fleet that had set sail from Venice in October 1202, we meet Stryphnos once again. In condemning the apathy and indolence of Alexios III’s closest counsellors, Niketas does not mention any names in the b-text. In versions PLO he becomes more specific (541/41 ff. PLO):

The *doux* of the fleet, Michael Stryphnos, who was married to the empress’ sister, being most shrewd, not only exchanged the bolts and anchors of ships for gold, but also ran after sails and sold ropes, so that he emptied the Roman dockyards of every warship.³⁹⁹

Stryphnos was certainly a man immune from this sort of criticism, as we learn from the countless praises heaped upon his person by Michael Choniates.⁴⁰⁰ His fraudulent ways were to cost Byzantium dearly, for when the Latin fleet reached Constantinople, only twenty rotten and worm-eaten ships were available to defend the city according to the testimony offered by the historian.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ *Orationes et epistulae*, p. 69

³⁹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 491/20-24 om. b. Niketas’ allegations regarding Stryphnos’ greed are confirmed by Genoese complaints that Stryphnos imposed excessive exactions upon them when he was still a tax-collector (ἐπὶ τοῦ βεστιαρίου). A. Sanguineti & B. Gerolamo (eds.), ‘Nuova serie di documenti sulle relazioni di Genova coll’ Impero bizantino’, *Atti della Società ligure di storia patria* 28 (1896-1898), p. 414.

³⁹⁹ ναὶ μὲν καὶ ὁ τοῦ στόλου δοῦξ Μιχαὴλ ὁ Στρυφνός, κασιγνήτη τῆς δεσποίνης συνευγμένος, δεινότατος ὦν μὴ μόνον γόμφους καὶ ἀγκύρας νηῶν χρυσίου ἀλλάξασθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ λαίφεσιν ἐπιθέσθαι καὶ ἐξαργυρίσαι πρότονα ἀπαξάπαντος πλοίου μακροῦ τὰ νεώρια Ῥωμαίων ἐκέκνωσε.

⁴⁰⁰ Michael Choniates, I, pp. 324-42: προσφώνημα εἰς τὸν μέγαν δούκα τὸν Στρυφνόν. Around 1201/2, Stryphnos was sent to Greece to calm the disorder that had arisen there due to the rebellion of the *protostrator* Manuel Kamytzes.

⁴⁰¹ Nik.Chon., p. 541/47-50.

Niketas' criticism of the 'powerful' does not end with corrupt officials and incompetent or vengeful military commanders. Indeed, in his damning representation of Byzantium's civil and military establishment, the author ventures to include all the individuals who were involved or supported the government of the Komnenoi/Angeloi. An excellent example is offered by Andronikos Doukas.⁴⁰² This individual had been, along with Constantine Makrodoukas,⁴⁰³ one of Andronikos I's staunchest supporters. But it would not be long before they were both charged with the crime of high treason and executed on Ascension Day, 1184.⁴⁰⁴ Niketas' description of this episode in version b is quite brief and it is significant that he portrays Doukas in a positive light: 'Andronikos Doukas *pretended* to be the most reliable among Andronikos' supporters'.⁴⁰⁵ He describes Makrodoukas in similar terms and then goes on to bewail the inhuman executions carried out on the orders of the emperor. The entire episode serves to illustrate the savageness of Andronikos' tyrannical regime.⁴⁰⁶

In the a-text, Niketas expands his account with a cynical characterisation of Andronikos Doukas, which adds a new twist to the episode (292/80-293/88 om. b):

Andronikos Doukas, a lecherous and knavish man with shamelessness emitting from his face, pretended to be the most reliable among Andronikos' supporters. Whenever Andronikos declared that he would gouge out the eyes of someone, Andronikos Doukas, as a pupil of the murderer who from the beginning takes joy in the misfortunes of men, would decree the loss of hands or decide on impalement, and frequently spoke ill against Andronikos, shamelessly upbraiding him for not inflicting suitable punishments for offences.

It is clear that Doukas, a prominent supporter of Andronikos' regime, who in the b-text *only pretended* to support the tyrant and was ruthlessly executed, is here assigned a role more vicious than that of the 'man-slaying' Andronikos Komnenos. The paradox can be explained if we look at Niketas' treatment of the reception of Andronikos' government as a whole. In the b-text, it is Andronikos himself and his

⁴⁰² Polemis, *The Doukai*, p. 132.

⁴⁰³ Polemis, *The Doukai*, p. 192, n. 2, 3.

⁴⁰⁴ For these events see K. Manafes, 'Ανέκδοτος νεκρικός διάλογος υπαινισσόμενος πρόσωπα καὶ γεγονότα τῆς βασιλείας Ἀνδρονίκου Α' τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ', *Ἀθηνᾶ* 77 (1976-77), pp. 308-22; Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 55-56; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 116-17. Both were thought to have been co-conspirators of Isaakios Komnenos, *dux* of Cilicia, who had rebelled against Andronikos and declared himself independent ruler of the island of Cyprus.

⁴⁰⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 292/80-82 b.

⁴⁰⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 292/68ff.

despised minister Stephanos Hagiochristophorites who take the bulk of the blame for the savageness of the regime. Niketas leaves the reader with the impression that everyone else was simply powerless before the tyrant. The Komnenian family is especially targeted and suffers great losses under his rule, while the senate is portrayed as the tyrant's pawn. David Komnenos, the governor of Thessaloniki betrays the city for fear of Andronikos, and certain persons of influence who dared speak out against the tyrant are almost stoned to death by the vulgar masses.⁴⁰⁷ This could reflect how the chaotic situation, which arose after the death of Manuel Komnenos, was conveniently viewed from the vantage point of the late 1190s/early 1200s where some of Andronikos' fiercest supporters or relatives of theirs were still quite active in the administration.⁴⁰⁸

The primary example, as we have already seen, is Basil Kamateros' enthusiastic support for the tyrant – a support, which Niketas glossed over in the b-text. The identity of the murderers of the young Alexios II remains a secret in the b-text, while in version a we are specifically told that Andronikos Komnenos selected Stephanos Hagiochristophorites, Constantine Tripsychos and Theodore Dadibrenos to carry out the execution.⁴⁰⁹ It is certainly no coincidence that the Tripsychoi had a long tradition of civil service under the Komnenoi/Angeloi. A Basil Tripsychos served Manuel Komnenos as *primmekerios* of the Vardariotes,⁴¹⁰ and a Nikolaos Tripsychos served Isaakios II Angelos as *pronorarios* and *praitor*.⁴¹¹ This individual can be securely identified as being one and the same with a certain Nikolaos Tripsychos, *dikaiodotes* and *megas logariastes ton sekreton*, under Alexios III.⁴¹²

The same holds true for Andronikos Doukas, whose distinguished surname and connection to the Komnenoi sheltered him from criticism in the b-text. Members of the Doukas family were related to the ruling dynasty of the Komnenoi/Angeloi and quite naturally occupied high positions in their respective governments throughout

⁴⁰⁷ See episode where certain judges of the *velum*, Demetrios Tornikes, Leo Monasteriotes and Constantine Patrenos very nearly lost their lives at the hands of the mob when they questioned Andronikos' decision to prosecute the empress Maria-Xene: Nik.Chon., pp. 265-66.

⁴⁰⁸ Michael Choniates felt obligated to justify his own unqualified enthusiasm for the tyrant in his speech to the new emperor Isaakios Angelos by claiming that he had been fooled by Andronikos' hypocrisy, I, p. 218. It was certainly to Niketas' credit that he had not been a member of Andronikos' government, as Michael points out with characteristic pride in the *Monodia*: I, p. 350.

⁴⁰⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 274/13-14 om. b.

⁴¹⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 136/41; Chalandon, *Les Comnène*, II, p. 225 n. 6 and 648, n. 16.

⁴¹¹ Michael Choniates, II, pp. 67-68.

⁴¹² P. Lemerle, 'Notes sur l'administration Byzantine à la veille de la IVe Croisade d'après deux documents inédits des archives de Lavra', *REB* 19 (1961), pp. 261.

the second half of the twelfth century.⁴¹³ Although Niketas is certainly exaggerating by portraying Andronikos Doukas as a man obsessed with some kind of blood lust, the purpose of the malicious character depiction is to lay the responsibility for Andronikos' tyrannical regime on the prominent individuals who supported him.

Not surprisingly, Niketas conducts the greatest number of revisions in his discussion of those individuals who either served under or supported Alexios III Angelos. Precedence should be here given to the omission of the names of Alexios' co-conspirators in 1195 in the b-text. Three of the five individuals mentioned by Niketas served as military commanders under Alexios III. George Palaiologos died fighting the rebel Ivanko-Alexios around the year 1200. This piece of information is only supplied in version a.⁴¹⁴ Manuel Kantakouzenos was appointed military commander of an expedition against the pseudo-Alexios from Cilicia. Again, this information is missing from the b-text.⁴¹⁵ Theodore Branas, son of the rebel Alexios, appears in the b-text during the reign of Isaakios II as a military commander⁴¹⁶, but two references to his person during the reign of Alexios III, are once again omitted in the b-text.⁴¹⁷

Certain individuals make their appearance only in the a-text. Constantine Frangopoulos was the naval commander sent out to the Euxine Pontos by Alexios III to plunder Byzantine and Turkish merchant vessels.⁴¹⁸ John Lagos, Alexios' appointee for commander of the Praetorian prison, released his own prisoners to ransack and plunder the goods of the citizens of Constantinople.⁴¹⁹ Bestralites, an imperial bodyguard, was ordered by Alexios III to murder Vatatzes, the alleged lover of the Empress Euphrosyne.⁴²⁰ Given the surreptitious nature of the tasks these persons performed for the government, it comes as no surprise that they received no mention whatsoever in the b-text.

⁴¹³ For the position of the Doukai under the Komnenian regime see synodal lists of the period reproduced in Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 501-09. For the Angeloi see Guiland, 'Les Logothètes', pp. 63-65, and Appendix I.

⁴¹⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 512/81-82 om. b.

⁴¹⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 462/37ff. altered in b.

⁴¹⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 409/25.

⁴¹⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 474/1, 500/81.

⁴¹⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 528/80-529/8 om. b.

⁴¹⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 524/84-526/33.

⁴²⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 486/42-55 om. b.

One final example is served by the case of John Steiriones, a naval commander under Alexios III and subsequently Theodore Laskaris.⁴²¹ In the b-text, Niketas tells us that Alexios III had sent this individual against the infamous pirate Gafforio. Steriones' initial attempt against Gafforio was not successful, but when Alexios sent him out for a second time, the commander appeared unexpectedly before the enemy and not only won a decisive victory, but also killed Gafforio.⁴²² In the a-text Niketas supplies the reader with the supplementary information that Steiriones was himself a pirate from Calabria who had entered Byzantine service. He then expands significantly on the aforementioned episode. It seems that Steiriones was under instructions from the emperor to lure Gafforio with a peace agreement (of which Niketas provides the details), and then engage him unexpectedly in battle. One again, we see how Niketas transforms this episode initially boasting of imperial success to one that essentially demonstrates Byzantine deception and duplicity.

The administrators of the *basileia* were the individuals, who along with the emperor possessed the power to steer the wheel of government and alter the course of events. The emphasis on the personalities of these individuals and the complaints about the results of their political actions characterise Niketas' work of revision. Although the form, contents and quality of the historian's criticisms vary from person to person, it is clear that Niketas is mostly concerned with how certain powerful individuals behaved instead of what they did and why they did it. For example, we are never told why John Poutzenos abolished the contributions for the upkeep and maintenance of the fleet, nor are we informed about the policy reforms carried out by Constantine Mesopotamites. But we do know that Poutzenos was a glutton and that Mesopotamites' eyebrows grew in a single line without separation. Similarly, we are provided with a host of detailed episodes demonstrating the corrupt and unscrupulous nature of the Kamateroi, but we remain totally ignorant of their political actions. This does not mean that Niketas did not have justifiable grounds for criticism. It means that he was preoccupied with something entirely different.

As we have seen, the historian's *Kaiserkritik* in the a-text was in many cases based on criticisms latent in the b-text. The catastrophic events of 1204 and the

⁴²¹ Villehardouin, p. 153: the Latin historian tells us that Steiriones was chief admiral of Laskaris' fleet. See Angold, *Byzantine Government*, p. 196.

⁴²² Nik.Chon., pp. 482/8-483/34 b.

author's transformed social and political status gave him both the pretext and the opportunity to revise his historical work, which had been written under duress. Hence the revelation of court intrigues, murderous secrets, illicit sexual affairs and detrimental political actions. The sweeping revision of the discussion of the reign of Alexios III, along with the emphasis that Niketas places on his own colleagues in the administration reveal the constraints placed upon the author at the time of the original composition.

On the other hand, the collapse of the empire undoubtedly gave our historian greater cause and justification for such criticism. Here, the connection with 1204 is both implicit and explicit. It is explicit that Michael Stryphnos sold parts of Byzantine warships for personal profit and thus Byzantium could not oppose the Venetian fleet. But it is implicit that the greediness of the *protostrator* Manuel Kamytzes led to the humiliating defeat of the Byzantines by the Vlach rebel Ivanko-Alexios, and it is implicit that the indolence of Alexios the *protosebastos* allowed the usurpation of Andronikos Komnenos with devastating consequences. For our historian, mistake upon successive mistake led to the weakening of the state, bred widespread corruption and ultimately hastened the disaster of 1204. Whether Niketas complains of errors in policy and whether he criticises the character faults of powerful individuals, he is always demonstrating the reasons why Byzantium collapsed in 1204.

It is, of course, easier to understand past events from the distance and clear-sightedness afforded by time. However, for the residents of the largest, wealthiest, and most well fortified city in Christendom, it was inconceivable that when the Fourth Crusade arrived in the Sea of Marmara in the summer of 1203, that Constantinople would fall to the sword of the Latins. Niketas attempted to understand these events the only way he knew how; by laying the responsibility on the powerful individuals of the times. In doing this, he followed the dictates of his historiographical tradition, where criticism of personalities went hand in hand with criticism of policies. How Niketas integrated these criticisms into his explanation for 1204 will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE ARGUMENT OF THE *HISTORIA*

‘Was the fall of Constantinople to the Venetians and the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade just an accident or did the Byzantines bring it upon themselves? Given the chaotic condition of the Byzantine Empire throughout the reign of Alexios III Angelos, I found it difficult to separate the fall of Byzantium to outside forces from its disintegration within. In this I was only following the great historian Niketas Choniates.’¹ This estimation is found in the most up-to-date English language textbook of the period leading to 1204. It is most interesting because it states clearly the three most basic assumptions of modern scholars of the period: (1) 1204 was the culmination of decades of internal instability and corruption; (2) The reign of Alexios III represents the apogee of Byzantine decadence; (3) Niketas Choniates, an objective and critical observer of his own times, formulated this theory with the benefit of hindsight.

Without for the moment questioning these assumptions, let us begin by reiterating that Niketas Choniates is our only major source for the crucial era in Byzantine history that begins with the death of Alexios I Komnenos in 1118 and culminates with the capture of Constantinople by the armies of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Yet while the significance of Niketas’ account of the decline and collapse of the Byzantine empire has long been recognised, a major problem still lies in the modern interpretation of the nature of Niketas’ explanation/s for the fall. This is because modern scholars have almost unanimously accepted Niketas’ view of an internal collapse without examining the principles under which it was formulated. At present there seem to exist three different strands of thought concerning Niketas’ historical causation and argumentation.

Charles Brand and Herbert Hunger underestimated Niketas’ historical judgement when they assumed, mostly along the same lines, that the author only provided us with a superficial explanation for the collapse of the empire.² Both scholars were referring to Niketas’ identification of the *major cause* (αἰτιώτατον) of the fall of Byzantium as the Komnenoi, whose incessant and catastrophic rebellions virtually invited Byzantium’s enemies to attack the empire. Brand goes so far as to

¹ Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, p. 173.

² Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, p. 156; Hunger, *Literatur*, I, p. 433-434.

suggest that because Niketas himself was involved in the regime, he placed all the blame on the flight of exiles such as Prince Alexios and the machinations of the Pope and the Venetians. The fallacy of the argument lies in the isolation of a single passage taken to represent Niketas' entire discussion of the decline of Byzantium. Only when this passage is viewed within the context of the historian's overall argument for the fall, does its significance and meaning become apparent. We shall return to this later.

In contrast, some scholars attribute to Niketas the view that the empire fell because of imperial misrule. Robert Browning believed Niketas saw the cause of decline in the personal weakness and corruption of its rulers. 'But sometimes', says Browning 'he [Niketas] seems to be reaching after more profound explanations which he has not the conceptual information to formulate.'³ Unfortunately, Browning failed to define exactly what he meant by 'conceptual information' or 'profound explanations'. This line of argument was followed and expanded by Jonathan Harris, who in recent articles emphasised the importance of the genre of *Kaiserkritik* in Niketas' work. Looking at Niketas' argumentation from beginning to end, Harris concluded that when it came to assessing historical causation, the main concern of Niketas was an assessment of the character and actions of the emperor. Thus, 'in the imperial incumbent [...] lay the major cause of the disaster of 1204.'⁴ No one could seriously challenge the view that the Byzantine emperor was the major concern of the historian, but this does not necessarily mean that in criticising the actions and characters of individual emperors, Niketas was providing us with the deep-rooted causes of 1204.

A final viewpoint, represented by Alexander Kazhdan and Paul Magdalino seems to venture beyond historical causation and argumentation, touching upon Niketas' philosophy of history. Alexander Kazhdan expressed the opinion that the author betrayed a very subjective and personal view of the catastrophe that fell upon Byzantium. According to Kazhdan, Niketas felt that the fall of Constantinople was not a random event, but one that was ultimately rooted in the 'corruption' of Byzantine society. Thus, Niketas attempted to persuade himself and his readers that the capture was an act of divine providence and that the wrath of God was destined to fall upon those who perpetrated this great atrocity. He brilliantly summarises this

³ R. Browning, *The Byzantine Empire*, London 1980, pp. 150-51.

⁴ Harris, 'Distortion, divine providence and genre in Nicetas Choniates's account of the collapse of Byzantium 1180-1204', *JMS* 26 (2000), pp. 19-21; Idem, 'Looking back on 1204: Nicetas Choniates in Nicaea', *Mésogeios* 12 (2001), pp. 117-24.

argument: 'He [Niketas] could not escape the conclusion that the tragedy of Byzantium was the natural crown of a long arc of time, which he had witnessed. The expectation of the catastrophe permeates the whole of the history.'⁵

Similarly, Paul Magdalino centres his view of Niketas' argumentation for the fall on the theme of divine retribution: 'the theme of divine retribution clearly underlies his [Niketas'] whole vision of the Comnenian empire's decline and fall, and it is the strand which connects all his disapproving remarks about the emperors of his day. Whether he accuses them of indolence, vainglory, personal immorality, occultism, impiety or tyranny, and whether he puts the blame on them personally or on the general corruption of Byzantine society, he is demonstrating why God withdrew his favour from the 'holy nation' and gave it to peoples, who however unspeakable in their manners, somehow had integrity where the Byzantines were hollow.'⁶ Taken together, Kazhdan and Magdalino come closer to Niketas' approach to historical causation or even his philosophy of history than any other scholars. But in the end they do not explain why Niketas felt Byzantine society was corrupt. What went wrong?

In contrast to such disagreement, most scholars seem to be in complete agreement concerning the 'real' causes behind the collapse of Byzantium, as viewed from a modern historiographical perspective. One need only glance at the headings of several chapters in Byzantine textbooks dealing with the final decades of the twelfth century. George Ostrogorsky's, 'The Collapse (1185-1204)', Charles Brand's, 'The Failure of Byzantine Foreign Policy: The Fourth Crusade at Constantinople', Michael Angold's, 'Byzantium 1180-1204: The Failure of the Comnenian System', and the article of Ralph Johannes Lilie 'Des Kaiser's Macht und Ohnmacht: Zum Zerfall der Zentralgewalt in Byzanz vor dem vierten Kreuzzug', to mention but a few. Modern historians naturally cite a multiplicity of causes, which of course weigh differently in their significance; weakness in the fabric of government, deterioration of the navy, governmental corruption, local separatism, failure to find a *modus vivendi* with the western nations, and so on. In other words, Byzantium fell from within. This idea then takes us back to the central theme of Niketas' narrative. Yet modern scholarship is still at pains to establish exactly what that is.

⁵ Kazhdan, Introduction to *Narrazione cronologica*, I, pp. XXIV-XXV, XXXI-XXXII.

⁶ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 14.

This should be attributed to the lack of modern works on the Byzantine philosophy of history, which in its turn is rooted in the lack of such works by Byzantine authors themselves.⁷ The old, but persistent dichotomy between the 'cyclic' view of history held by the ancients and the 'progressive' view, which Byzantium inherited from the revelation and the Church Fathers, is an oversimplification, and a dangerous one at that.⁸ The view that the Byzantine philosophy of history is homogeneous and scarcely differentiated was challenged more than a quarter of a century ago by C. Turner, who pointed to a diversity of approaches to historical causation found in late Byzantine historiography.⁹ We shall not attempt here to tackle a problem of this magnitude, but it seems that the key to understanding Niketas' argument and his views on the nature of history is to be found only if we grasp the standpoint from which he himself approached it. That standpoint can ultimately be traced to the historiographical tradition to which our author belonged and to the theological and philosophical views prevalent within his own society.

Before moving on to Niketas himself, however, it is worth discussing the views of another historian of political decline, Michael Attaleiates.¹⁰ Although the historians of the fifteenth century (Sphrantzes, Doukas, Chalcocondyles and Kritoboulos) are closer to Niketas with respect to subject matter, i.e. the collapse of the empire and its subjugation to foreign enemies, Attaleiates is closer in time and historical outlook. This had to do with Byzantium's position in the world and its own

⁷ J. N. Ljubarskij, 'New Trends in the study of Byzantine Historiography', *DOP* 47 (1993), pp. 131-38. The modern works on the Byzantine philosophy of history are: P. Photiadès, 'Quelques traits de la conception byzantine de l'histoire', *REG* 77 (1964), p. 569 (one page outline); E. Ivánka, 'Der fall Konstantinopels und das byzantinische Geschichtsdenken', *JÖB* 3 (1954), pp. 19-34; C. Turner, 'Pages from Late Byzantine Philosophy of History', *BZ* 57 (1964), pp. 346-73; J. N. Ljubarskij, 'Homme, destinée, providence: Les avatars des notions antiques dans la philosophie byzantine de l'histoire', *La Philosophie Grecque et sa portée culturelle et historique*, ed. A. Garzya, Moscow 1985, pp. 229-68. However, one should note that medieval western philosophy of history has been the subject of numerous modern works. A good introduction is: *Geschichtsdenken und Geschichtsbild im Mittelalter*, ed. W. Lammers, Darmstadt 1961.

⁸ See K. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, Chicago 1950, p. 19; R. H. Bainton, 'Ideas of History in Patristic Christianity', *Collected Papers in Church History*, Boston 1962, pp. 3-21; R. L. P. Milburn, *Early Christian Interpretations of History*, London 1954, pp. 74-92.

⁹ Turner, 'Philosophy of History', pp. 346-73. Turner pointed to two separate trends in late Byzantine philosophy of history. Sphrantzes and Doukas upheld the traditional medieval view of historical causation with emphasis on divine providence, while Chalcocondyles and Kritoboulos represented the relativistic view. This latter idea rested on the Hellenistic concept of fickle and unreliable Chance.

¹⁰ On this author see E. Tsolakís, 'Aus dem Leben des Michael Attaleiates (Seine Heimatstadt, sein Geburts- und Todesjahr)', *BZ* 58 (1965), pp. 3-10; Idem, 'Das Geschichtswerk des Michael Attaleiates und die Zeit seiner Abfassung', *Buζ* 2 (1970), pp. 251-68; Hunger, *Literatur*, I, pp. 382-89; *ODB* 1, p. 229; Kazhdan, *Byzantine Literature*, pp. 23-86.

self-image, which after 1204, was never the same.¹¹ Both historians were nurtured on ideas of Byzantine greatness and they themselves lived during an age of affluence and cultural achievement – an age when it was inherently more difficult to explain Byzantium's misfortunes, than say, the fifteenth century.

Byzantine political philosophy was always supported by strong theological undertones.¹² The idea of the divinely protected empire (Θεοστήρικτον κράτος), along with that of Constantinople as the earthly counterpart of the 'New Jerusalem', and the emperor as the 'anointed of God' would eventually lead to a tendency to regard the reverses of the empire as temporary chastening.¹³ Consequently, the traditional view that piety is rewarded with prosperity and sinfulness with adversity remained predominant throughout the whole of the Byzantine era. Yet a more anthropocentric approach to historical causation with strong emphasis on the actions and personalities of leading individuals found expression in the historical works of the Middle Byzantine period (and more specifically from the tenth through the twelfth centuries) as represented by a group of outstanding writers such as the continuators of the chronicle of Theophanes, Leo the Deacon, Michael Psellos, and others.¹⁴

Michael Attaleiates wrote a history covering the period 1034-1079/80. The internal instability of the state and the increasing reduction of its territories in the east are the two dominant themes of this fragile epoch.¹⁵ What is of particular interest for us is Attaleiates' general reflections on the reasons for Byzantium's humiliating defeat at the battle of Mantzikert (1071) and the drastic decline in the fortunes of the state. In a very significant passage referring to Constantine X (1059-67), the historian

¹¹ See P. J. Alexander, 'The Strength of Empire and Capital as seen through Byzantine Eyes', *Speculum* 37 (1962), p. 356.

¹² Bainton, 'Ideas of History', p. 17.

¹³ N. H. Baynes, 'The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople', *AB* 67 (1967), pp. 165-77.

¹⁴ Ljubarskij, 'Philosophie byzantine de l'histoire', p. 245 ff.

¹⁵ On the internal history of the empire in the eleventh century see: P. Charanis, 'The Byzantine Empire in the eleventh century', in K. M. Setton & M. W. Baldwin (eds.), *A History of the Crusades*, I, Philadelphia 1955, pp. 177-219 (repr.) Idem, *Social Economic and Political life in the Byzantine Empire*, Variorum 1973, no. XVI; J.M. Hussey, 'The Byzantine Empire in the eleventh century: Some different interpretations', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series, 32 (1950), pp. 71-85; N. Svoronos, 'Société et organisation intérieure dans l'Empire byzantin au XI^e siècle', *Thirteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford 1966: Main Papers XII. (repr.) N. Svoronos, *Études sur l'organisation intérieure, la société et l'économie de l'Empire Byzantine*, Variorum 1973, no. IX; H. Ahrweiler, 'Recherches sur la société byzantine au XI^e siècle: nouvelles hierarchies et nouvelles solidarités', *TM* 7 (1976), pp. 99-124. On Mantzikert and the loss of Byzantine Anatolia see M. Angold, 'The Byzantine State on the eve of the battle of Mantzikert', *BF* 16 (1990), pp. 9-34; S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1971.

discusses two different causes of success and failure; imperial misrule and divine retribution:

Those who examined affairs with sensibility differentiated and attributed misfortune to the evilness of the emperor and success to his virtue. One would not be at fault if he considered that lamentable experiences are punishments for the sins of men and that success is bestowed only by divine providence and not as a reward for imperial virtue, for success encompasses all and is not restricted to one individual. Everything good comes from God. But the good will of God comes from prayer and is accompanied by behaviour, which is pleasing to Him. But for things that occur the emperors are held responsible because they are blamed for their mistakes and praised for their successes. It is like considering the rider responsible for the result of a race instead of the horse.¹⁶

It is clear that although Attaleiates does not oppose the theory of imperial responsibility, he seems to favour the view that the entirety of the Byzantine peoples and not the emperor alone is to be held accountable for success and failure. Attaleiates may have had his own reasons for wishing not to lay the blame entirely on the shoulders of the emperor, but this is not particularly significant. What is important is that these two viewpoints existed in Byzantium.¹⁷ When Attaleiates comes round to explaining the ultimate disaster itself, he begins with a comparison of Byzantium with ancient Rome. The ancient Romans took general care to ascertain and obey the will of gods. Byzantine emperors and military commanders of the eleventh century were concerned only with enriching themselves. The soldiers, imitating their superiors committed great crimes and behaved violently and inhumanely towards those of the same race. The people, in turn, welcomed the defeat of their own armies because in this way, the cities of the empire would be cleansed of their crimes. The result of Attaleiates' moralizing is a terrifying condemnation of Byzantium's civil and military

¹⁶ Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, (eds.), W. Brunet de Presle & I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonn 1853, pp. 86-87: διὸ καὶ κακία καὶ ἀρετῇ βασιλικῇ τὰς δυσπραγίας καὶ αὐθις τὰς εὐπραγίας οἱ νουνεχῶς συμβάλλοντες τὰ πράγματα διεμέριζον. εἰ δὲ τὰ μὲν δύστηνα πάθη τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἀμαρτημάτων τυγχάνειν ἀντέκτισιν, τὸ δ' εὐπαθὲς τῆς θείας μόνης ἀντιλήψεως θεῖη τις καὶ μὴ βασιλικῆς ἔπαθλον ἀρετῆς, ὥς τῆς εὐπραγίας γενικῆς καὶ μὴ εἰδικῆς καθεστῶσης, οὐκ ἄν διαμάρτοι τοῦ πρόποντος· πάντα γὰρ ἄνωθεν τὰ βελτίονα. ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εὐμενὲς πάλιν ἐπικάμπτεται δι' εὐχῆς ἐνεργουμένης καὶ συγκροτουμένης εὐαρεστήσεσιν. ἔπιγράφονται δὲ τοῖς βασιλεῦσι τὰ παρεμπίπτοντα διὰ τὸ καὶ τὴν πλείονα μέμψιν καὶ ἀνίαν τῶν δρωμένων οὐ συνετῶς, καὶ τὴν εὐφροσύνην ὡσαύτως τῶν κατορθουμένων ἐπικεικῶς εἰς αὐτοὺς παραγίνεσθαι, ὥσπερ εἰς τοὺς τῶν ἀρμάτων ἰθυντῆρας καὶ μὴ τοὺς ἵππους τὰ ἐντεῦθεν ἀποτελέσματα.

¹⁷ See for example the remarks of the sixth-century writer Agapetus in his advice to Emperor Justinian: *Expositio capitam amonitorium...imperatoris Justiniano*, PG 86, cols. 1164-74 (Engl. trans. E. Barker, *Social and Political thought in Byzantium*, Oxford 1957, pp. 54-61).

establishment. In the end, the author quite clearly states his belief that the catastrophe at Mantzikert was the result of divine retribution (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ νέμεσιν).¹⁸

Consequently, his entire account is imbued with the notion of sin and divine retribution, and at every opportunity he denounces the shortcomings of his own people. The present Romans are in no position to attain glorious victories, but are only worthy of allowing their enemies to gloat.¹⁹ Their negligence and evil disposition does not allow them to attach to events their proper meaning.²⁰ When compared to the Turks and Latins, the Byzantines are inferior, and so on.²¹ Yet these reflections do not prevent Attaleiates from casting the blame on individual emperors. The Turks roam unhindered throughout Anatolia because of the greediness of the emperor.²² The emperor Romanos Diogenes (1068-71) attributes the successes of the Turks to the mistakes of previous emperors,²³ and Michael VII (1071-78) 'admits' that because of his own mistakes, the Romans incurred such sufferings.²⁴ Thus these two seemingly opposing views of imperial misrule and divine retribution for sin coexist side by side in the narrative, just as they must have coexisted side by side in the Byzantine psyche.²⁵

At first glance the deeply religious tone of Niketas' *Historia*, the plethora of biblical quotations and allusions, along with the entreaties and supplications to God seem to confirm that our historian held the time-honoured view that defeat is punishment for sin. It is undeniable that for Niketas the reins of history were very much in the hands of God. The 'right hand of God', the 'will of God', the 'wrath of God', 'retribution for sin' and other such concepts determine the historical

¹⁸ Attaleiates, pp. 193-98.

¹⁹ Attaleiates, pp. 114-15.

²⁰ Attaleiates, p. 144.

²¹ Attaleiates, p. 164, 190.

²² Attaleiates, p. 44.

²³ Attaleiates, p. 97.

²⁴ Attaleiates, p. 187.

²⁵ See especially two texts of this period. At the end of the eleventh century, the discourses of the patriarch of Antioch, John Oxeites in (ed.), P. Gautier, 'Diatribes de Jean l'Oxite contre Alexis Ier Comnène', *REB* 28 (1970), pp. 31-33: In order to explain the causes of the Pecheneg invasions (commencing 1085) and the reasons why Byzantium had so far failed to annihilate the enemy, Oxeites points to a series of errors committed by the administration of Alexios I Komnenos. These include excessive taxation, corruption of government officials, raiding and pillaging of sacred places, and the mass immigration of impoverished peasants to foreign lands. By these injustices, the administration aroused the wrath of God, who allowed the Byzantines to be delivered to 'barbarians'. In 1185/6 the account of the capture of Thessaloniki in 1185 by its metropolitan, Eustathios, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 155: In concluding his account, Eustathios lists the sinful causes (ἀμαρτητικά αἰτίαι) which led to the capture of the city, i.e. the envy, pride, slander, dishonesty, avarice, usury and ingratitude of the citizens of Thessaloniki.

development of events. There is no shortage of passages, which seem to indicate that God, the 'lord of the seasons and the years' directs the course of human affairs. Manuel I Komnenos was defeated in Sicily because God wished it so and his judgments are beyond human understanding;²⁶ Andronikos I Komnenos was toppled from his throne because he had aroused the wrath of Almighty;²⁷ God refused to consent to making the rebel general Alexios Branas an emperor;²⁸ God brought down his wrath upon the Byzantines because they deposed Isaakios Angelos from his rightful dominion;²⁹ and it was by God's will that Constantinople was conquered by 'barbarians'.³⁰ Convinced that Byzantine 'sins' were ultimately to blame for the fall of the city, Niketas even compared the fires which devastated Constantinople before its capture to those which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.³¹

Historical causation, however, could function simultaneously on two levels, the divine and the human and Niketas clearly believed that divine and human agents were in harmony. The hand of God may topple tyrants, but it rarely acts without some intermediary (ἀμέσως).³² It is principally on these 'intermediary' human agents that Niketas' account is concentrated; human endeavours rather than providential design influence the course of events, and the divine will is but the general framework in which they operate. This is precisely the reason why the ideology of the omnipresence of God in human affairs is frequently challenged when it comes to real life situations in his narrative.³³ An excellent example is offered by Manuel I Komnenos' expedition to Serbia in the winter of 1149-50. The ruler of Serbia, Pervoslav Uros II, not willing to meet the Byzantines in battle withdrew from the plains and in Niketas' own words taken from Psalm 120.1 'lifted his eyes to the

²⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 89/58-61.

²⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 349/91-92.

²⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 381/52-382/53.

²⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 467/82-84.

³⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 589/39-40: κατὰ θεῖον οἶμαι καὶ μὴ περίπτωσιν τυχηρὰν ἢ συγκυρίαν οὕτως πῶς συμβᾶν ἄλογον.

³¹ Nik.Chon., p. 576/3-5.

³² Nik.Chon., pp. 464/14-465/15; A.P. Kazhdan & S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the eleventh and twelfth Centuries*, Cambridge 1984, pp. 273-74.

³³ For the problem of the correlation or lack thereof between theological and philosophical doctrines and the degree to which they were applied in real life situations in the Middle Ages was discussed by H. M. Butterfield, 'The History of the Writing of History', in *XIe congrès international des sciences historiques. Rapports*, Stockholm 1960. For the arbitrary role of humans as agents of historical causation in Byzantine theological works see H.-G. Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, Rome 1937, p. 21ff.

mountains whence he expected help to come'.³⁴ The allusion is obvious: the Serbian ruler pleaded to God for assistance. He did not, however, receive it because the emperor 'trusting in his prowess cut down the barbarian regiments as if they were herds of cattle or flocks of goats', another allusion, this time to the *Odyssey* (6.130-34).³⁵ The moral of the story is clear: The Serbian ruler who looked to God for deliverance but abandoned his own people to be slaughtered by the invaders was defeated. On the other hand, Manuel Komnenos, who relied on his own military abilities, carried the day.

Another example is offered by the apathetic reaction of Isaakios II Angelos to the dangerous rebellion of his *strategos* Alexios Branas in 1187. When the troops of Branas reached the walls of Constantinople, the emperor gathered around him monks in the hope that they would implore God on his behalf and rested all his hopes for salvation on the 'Panoply of the Spirit' (παντευχία τοῦ πνεύματος). This would probably have been adequate in accordance with medieval thought, but for Niketas it was a sign of stupidity and weakness.³⁶ Thus the emperor's courageous brother-in-law, Conrad of Montferrat tactfully reminded him that he had neglected to make preparations for battle and encouraged him to throw off his apathy and collect an auxiliary force to counter the rebel.³⁷ Therefore, it is evident that Niketas accords a primary role to human action in influencing the outcome of events, outright discarding idle prayer as being worthless and vain.

Niketas, moreover, regularly forsakes divine for human responsibility when he is attempting to argue historical causation. For example, the gradual but steady loss of Byzantine territories in Asia Minor is blamed on the inactivity of the emperors, not some unspecified sin.³⁸ The pretext for the Norman invasion of 1185 was given by the flight of Alexios, a scion of the Komnenian family, to the court of the Sicilian King William II.³⁹ The alleged reason for the Vlacho-Bulgarian revolt (beginning in 1185/6) was the excessive demands made on them by Isaakios II Angelos.⁴⁰ Finally, as we have seen, the major cause of the collapse of the Byzantine

³⁴ Nik. Chon., p. 90/87-88: εἰς δὲ τὰ ὄρη αἶρει τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, ὅθεν προσεδόκα ἥξειν αὐτῷ τὴν βοήθειαν.

³⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 90/93-1.

³⁶ Kazhdan, Introduction to *Narrazione cronologica*, I, p. XII.

³⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 383/91-6.

³⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 72/83-85.

³⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 296/78-79.

⁴⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 368/47-52.

Empire was the Komnenos family, meaning all those who held power and were responsible for the administration of the state.⁴¹

While it would have been the height of presumption for a Christian to exclude God entirely from historical causation, Niketas unconsciously dogmatises about how and when God intervenes in human life through his own selection of divinely inspired events. Thus the interference of God is most prominent in death. The German Emperor Frederick Barbarossa is swept to Hades because of God's inscrutable judgement;⁴² the tyrant of Cyprus, Isaakios Komnenos is utterly destroyed by the hand of God;⁴³ the Vlach rebel leader Asan is murdered by God's decision;⁴⁴ and the German Emperor Henry VI dies by God's will.⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, God is placed in the forefront of the historical stage in Niketas' conventional lamentation for the fall of Constantinople. Here the author searches the Scriptures to describe his emotions, and consequently we read biblical echoes such as 'the city that drank at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury', or 'what was needed was a small chastening', or, 'remember us O Lord, and visit us with salvation', and so on. But this is merely superficial terminology far removed from the real interpretation of events and Niketas does not hesitate in stating this outright when he ends his lamentation with the phrase: 'most useful and timely are these scriptural verses in describing similar calamities.'⁴⁶

The anthropocentric approach to historical causation and more specifically the focus on the actions and personalities of leading individuals can be traced to antiquity.⁴⁷ For Herodotus the explanation of historical events was primarily sought at a human level. His own approach to historical causation emphasised the motives and actions of leading men and was concerned mostly with the assignment of responsibility, or blame.⁴⁸ In explaining the causes of the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides utilised the concepts of fear, honour and self-interest as motive forces

⁴¹ Nik.Chon., p. 529/25-31.

⁴² Nik.Chon., p. 416/27-28.

⁴³ Nik.Chon., p. 464/12-14.

⁴⁴ Nik.Chon., pp. 468/29-469/36.

⁴⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 479/44-46.

⁴⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 579/80-81.

⁴⁷ I cannot agree with the argument of R. Scott, 'The classical tradition in Byzantine Historiography', in R. Scott & M. Mullett (eds.), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, Birmingham 1981, pp. 61-74 that Byzantine historians 'imitated' classical models in regard to language and form, but developed their own independent view of historical causation which focused on an assessment of the actions and personalities of the emperors. This anthropocentric view of historical causation with emphasis on leading individuals was formulated in antiquity, not in Byzantium.

⁴⁸ P. Derow, 'Historical Explanation: Polybius and his Predecessors', in S. Hornblower (ed.), *Greek Historiography*, Oxford 1994, pp. 75-79. For Herodotus as a historian see D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus*, Toronto 1989.

behind the deeds of men. He did not attempt to explain why the war came about, but instead, rendered an account of why the Spartans began it, thus again focusing on assigning responsibility.⁴⁹ Similarly, historians such as Xenophon, Ephorus, Theopompus and Callisthenes sought an explanation for events in the characters, actions and motives of leading individuals, who eventually came to be the standard subject of historical explanation.⁵⁰

Indeed, this trend was followed by later writers, for example Polybius, who although ventured to explain historical events without imputing motives, still offered the reader an assessment of the character and actions of important political figures.⁵¹ As the political landscape of the ancient world came to be dominated more and more by monarchs, the aetiology of events shifted to their person. In imperial Rome as well as in early centuries of Byzantium, politics were mostly interpreted in terms of the behaviour and actions of the emperor.⁵² At around the same time arose the conviction that history was the proper medium for praise and retributive justice for leading individuals and that the role of the historian was to bequeath to posterity an assessment of their 'lives' and 'deeds'.⁵³ Although the 'dark years' of the seventh and eighth centuries marked a break in the continuity of historical thought, the revival of classical learning in the ninth century brought back the tradition of secular historiography with a focus on political and military events.⁵⁴ The emphasis on the character and actions of the Byzantine emperor was pursued even more tenaciously by the writers of the Macedonian era and in particular the continuators of the chronicle of Theophanes in the tenth century. In the eleventh century, Michael Psellos produced a masterful and sophisticated study of his own era, which clearly betrays a distinct secular outlook focused on an assessment of human character and actions.⁵⁵

On the other hand, Divine power was a potent force in the Ancient world. Herodotus assigned paramount significance to 'Fate' or 'Divine Power' in human

⁴⁹ C. W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1983, p. 80.

⁵⁰ Fornara, *Nature of History*, p. 82.

⁵¹ Derow, 'Historical Explanation', pp. 84-90.

⁵² A. Cameron, 'Early Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*: Two Case Histories', *BMGS* 3 (1977) p. 16; Hunger, *Literatur*, I, pp. 74-75; Z. Petre, 'La pensée historique de Zosime', *Studii Clasice* 7 (1965), pp. 263-72.

⁵³ Fornara, *Nature of History*, pp. 118-19. This trend is nowhere more explicit than in the *Anecdota* of Procopius of Caesarea: Procopius, *The Anecdota or Secret History*, trans. H. B. Dewing, Loeb Classical library, London 1935, pp. 5-7.

⁵⁴ A. Cameron, 'Byzantine Historiography' *DMA* 6 (1985), pp. 242-48.

⁵⁵ Ljubarskij, 'Philosophie byzantine de l'histoire', p. 244ff.

affairs.⁵⁶ For him, *Nemesis*, the personification of divine retribution, displayed a clear and repetitive pattern that spanned generations and cultures.⁵⁷ Similarly, the concept of capricious and incalculable 'Chance' (τύχη) frequently served as an explanation of success, failure, misfortune, paradox and coincidence.⁵⁸ Stoic Fate, guided by *Pronoia* or Forethought (which later became Providence) was clearly beyond the comprehension of the historian and had to be accepted in retrospect. The willingness to admit the existence of impersonal forces controlling human destinies was very different from ascribing a historical action to human agency. Yet these variegated concepts frequently operated together in the complex chain of explanations found in ancient historical writing. From the shape of events on earth, Polybius would easily infer the will of the Gods.⁵⁹ For Niketas, *Pronoia* could take on the ancient sense of Forethought or it could mean the Providence of God.⁶⁰ In his narrative, the concepts of *Nemesis*, Chance and Justice (δίκη), represent supernatural strands of causation that occasionally impinge on the interplay of human actions.⁶¹ To explain the frequent use of these concepts in Byzantine historical writing solely on the grounds of literary 'imitation' would be a gross distortion of their role and significance, for the desire to reconcile these ancient notions of historical causation with the Providence of the Christian God would consume the Byzantine thought-world for ages.⁶²

If we were to take another trait found both in Niketas and Attaleiates, namely 'corruption' or more general shortcomings or defects of an entire people, we would find that it too can be traced to antiquity. To explain victory or defeat, Herodotus did not look to the wickedness of the antagonists, but rather to the political, social, and moral defects of the protagonists. Thus he characterised the Ionians as 'effeminate' in order to explain the collapse of the Ionian revolt, and drew a direct causal link between the bravery of the Spartans and their well-ordered government.⁶³ Hence the future establishment of a direct correlation between a society's form of government

⁵⁶ H. Strasburger, *Die Wesensbestimmung der Geschichte durch die antike Geschichtsschreibung*, Wiesbaden 1966, p. 70. Also discussion in J. Gould, 'Herodotus and Religion', *Greek Historiography*, pp. 91-106.

⁵⁷ Löwith, *Meaning in History*, p. 7.

⁵⁸ For a thorough discussion see: *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, new. rev. ed. G. Wissowa, Stuttgart 1894-1978, col. 1650ff.

⁵⁹ Fornara, *Nature of History*, p. 81.

⁶⁰ Kazhdan, *Concordance*, 16, R976.

⁶¹ For Niketas' flexible use of these concepts with or without the epithet 'divine' see the following characteristic examples: pp. 59/1-4, 144/84-147/80 249/85-86, 93-1, 426/9, 466/59-61, 490/78-79.

⁶² See Ljubarskij, 'Philosophie byzantine de l'histoire', pp. 249-50.

⁶³ Herodotus, *Histories*, ed. A.D. Godley, Loeb Classical Library, London 1920-25, I, p. 77.

and the quality of its citizens. In this context, despotism was used to explain military and moral inferiority to the enemy and Herodotus set the trend when he explicitly stated that the Athenians attained military success only once they had become liberated from their tyranny.⁶⁴ In a similar manner, Polybius later ascribed the unprecedented military successes of Rome to the merits of its constitution.⁶⁵ The question of Rome's decline was answered along the same lines. Livy believed that Rome's deterioration resulted primarily from an erosion of moral character; and more specifically that the Roman character was 'corrupted' by luxury.⁶⁶ This articulation of sweeping societal judgments to explain major historical events merely represents a shift from more 'pragmatic' or 'immediate' causes to 'higher' causes, or to use a favourite adjective among modern scholars, 'deep-rooted' causes.

When Niketas embarked on his task to explain the capture of Constantinople in 1204 and the collapse of the empire thereafter, the precedent for explaining and rationalising such events had long been set by both ancient and Byzantine historians. His explanations were influenced by these concepts that originated in ancient thought, but moulded by the historian's pen so as to fit the circumstances of the twelfth century. This does not mean that Niketas shaped events in order to bring them into correspondence with his own philosophy of history. But it does mean that he was engaged in a continuous process of moulding his facts to his interpretations and his interpretations to his facts. This is nowhere more evident than in the comparative analysis of the two different versions of the *Historia*, which clearly demonstrates that Niketas' reconstruction and interpretation of events was in direct correlation with the purpose of his writing. The facts of history never come down to us in 'pure' form. They are always reflected through the mind of the recorder.⁶⁷ Once we have recognised that what we are reading in the *Historia* is Niketas Choniates on the twelfth century and not a history of the twelfth century written by Niketas Choniates, only then can we come closer to a deeper appreciation of the events he narrated.

But let us take matters from the beginning and view the text of the *Historia* in its entirety. The survival of Niketas' text in two versions, written both before and after the events of 1204, is our greatest tool for understanding the historian's

⁶⁴ Herodotus, III, p. 73ff.

⁶⁵ See discussion in F.W. Wallbank, *Polybius*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1972, p. 130ff.

⁶⁶ Fornara, *Nature of History*, p. 87ff.

⁶⁷ For the idea of the primacy of the writer in general see E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, New York 1961, pp. 24-54. For Byzantium: J. N. Ljubarskij, 'Quellenforschung and/or Literary Criticism. Narrative Structures in Byzantine Historical Writings', *Symbolae Osloenses* 73 (1998), pp. 5-22.

argument for the collapse of the Byzantine empire. Commencing with the b-text, when Manuel Komnenos ascended the throne in 1143, Byzantium was traversing its 'golden years' (χρυσᾶς ἔννας).⁶⁸ Although Niketas would voice complaints regarding Manuel's taxation policy, his absolutist style of government, and his financially burdensome foreign entanglements, the reader is in no way left with the impression that Manuel's long reign in any way represents a period of decline. Only after the emperor's death in 1180 do the affairs of state manifest a progressive deterioration. Niketas explains this on the grounds of Manuel's death and the insecurity and confusion that accompanied the regency regime. In his own words: 'For just as with the overthrow of a courageous and dignified leader, disorder reigns everywhere and each person pursues his own ends and all act against one another, as when a column is removed from its firm and steadfast base everything leans in the opposite direction.'⁶⁹ The empire was now in such confusion and disarray that the historian felt justified in warning of the dangers of anarchy.⁷⁰

Under the tyrannical regime of Andronikos Komnenos (1183-85) affairs take a turn for the worse. The city of Constantinople is in continual turmoil and the provinces suffer greatly from internal strife and foreign incursions. Niketas' moralizing against his own people begins during his discussion of the reign of Andronikos, and more specifically with the separatist movement of the former *dux* of Cilicia, Isaakios Komnenos in 1184.⁷¹ As a commentary to the historical action, he condemns the generation from which the tyrant Isaakios sprang as one which produced hemlock and brought utter ruin to the majority of the cities of the empire.⁷² The ten-year reign of Isaakios II Angelos (1185-95) begins with the triumphant defeat and expulsion of the Norman army (by the end of 1185), but is easily overshadowed by the drawn-out rebellion of the Vlacho-Bulgarians. Reflecting on successive Byzantine failures to crush the revolt, Niketas turns to divine providence and utilises biblical allusions to speak of unspecified sins committed by the multitude and the just retribution of God.⁷³ During the reign of Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203), Niketas concentrates on the military successes of the emperor. Not a single comment

⁶⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 59/17.

⁶⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 224/25-29.

⁷⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 225/47-55.

⁷¹ Nik.Chon., p. 290/12 ff.

⁷² Nik.Chon., p. 292/56-58.

⁷³ Nik.Chon., pp. 431/55-432/57.

concerning the state of the empire is found in the b-text and from the author's silence, the reader can easily draw the conclusion that nothing whatsoever was wrong.

Suddenly we come to the Fourth Crusade. Niketas first takes us back to the incarceration of Isaakios Angelos and relates how the former emperor conspired with his daughter Eirene and her husband, Philip of Swabia. According to the plan, the young Alexios (IV) escaped to the West where he was reunited with his sister and her husband. At this point Niketas deviates from the narrative to discuss the administration of the state under both the Angeloi emperors and particularly emphasises the oppressive taxation imposed on the Latin communities spread throughout the empire. According to the historian, the Angeloi played off the Pisans against the Venetians and refused to pay the compensation monies still owed to the latter.⁷⁴ In this way, the Venetians gradually turned against the Byzantines, waiting for the opportune moment to exact their revenge.

The Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo was particularly eager to fall upon the empire and incessantly schemed with others to attain his goals. The opportunity 'was furnished accidentally by time' and Dandolo joined forces with the knights of the Fourth Crusade in a military operation against Byzantium.⁷⁵ From that point on a series of mishaps and human errors led to capture of the city. Thus it would appear as if our historian attempted to explain the causes of the disaster in terms of the immediate political circumstances; the Byzantine plot to overthrow Alexios III with the help of the Venetians and the crusaders, and the conspiracy hatched by Venice and the crusaders to attack Byzantium. To provide the Venetians with a motive for attacking Byzantium, he emphasized their ill-treatment by the Angeloi emperors. In the a-text Niketas spun a dense web of causal connections that distinguished between what we may term 'direct' and 'long-term' causes by attempting to explain 1204 on two levels: (1) The immediate political circumstances; (2) A long-developing psychology that invested those circumstances with deadly significance.

⁷⁴ For the relations of the Angeloi with Venice see chrysobulls of 1187: TT, no. 70, pp. 179-89, no. 71, pp. 189-95, no. 72, pp. 195-203; chrysobull of 1189: TT, no. 74, pp. 206-11; chrysobull of 1198: TT, no. 83, pp. 234-38. For the Pisans see chrysobulls in Dölger-Wirth, *Regesten*, nos. 1607, 1650, 1651. Discussions in Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, pp. 195-231; R.-J. Lilie, *Handel und Politik zwischen dem byzantinischen Reich und den italienischen Kommunen Venedig, Pisa, und Genua in der Epoche der Komnenen und der Angeloi (1081-1204)*, Amsterdam 1984, pp. 24ff; D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice, A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge 1988, pp. 104-47; C. A. Maltezou, 'Venetian *habitores*, *burgenses* and merchants in Constantinople and its hinterland (twelfth-thirteenth centuries)', in *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, ed. C. Mango & G. Dagron, Aldershot 1993, pp. 233-41.

⁷⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 537/49ff.

The 'long-term' causes for the fall of Constantinople were outlined in the historian's introduction to the section following the capture of the city (ἱστορία τῶν μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν συμβάντων). Like Attaleiates before him, Niketas takes us back in time for a historical comparison. But while Attaleiates stresses the differences between the ancient Romans and the Byzantines, Niketas emphasises the similarities between the ancient Athenians and the Byzantines. For his comparison, the historian turns to the life of Solon by Plutarch. According to Plutarch's story, Solon had criticised his fellow Athenians for not opposing the tyranny of Peisistratos. He lectured the citizens in the marketplace, in part blaming their idleness and meanness of spirit, and in part urging them not to lose their liberty, for he thought that it was easy to stop a rising tyranny, but a great and more glorious action to destroy it. When no one sided with him, he returned home, brought out his arms and laid them before his door, reportedly saying that he had done his best to defend his country. Thereafter, he wrote poems reproaching the Athenians for their irresolution.⁷⁶

Niketas then transports us back to the thirteenth century, where he attempts to draw an analogy between Solon and a hypothetical individual who might have come to the rescue of Byzantium. But the historian sadly reflects that as Solon's efforts had been in vain, so would those of one of his own generation and thereafter compares the deplorable behaviour of the Athenians with that of the Byzantines. With a venomous pen, he reproaches the incompetent, indolent and apathetic emperors for their negligence and the corrupt and egotistical citizens for their inactivity.⁷⁷

It is significant to note that Niketas is not at all concerned with the deviation of the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople or the motives of the crusaders and the Venetians. Moreover, he is not criticising his own people for failing to respond to the Latin threat, but for allowing 'tyranny' to take root within the empire, as evidenced by the successive coups of 1183, 1185, 1195, and finally 1204. That is to say, that in order to explain Byzantium's capitulation to the forces of the Fourth Crusade, the historian does not look to the evil schemes of the enemy, but rather to the political, social and moral defects of his own people. As we have seen, looking within a society to find the reasons why it succumbed to outside forces is a persistent thought often encountered within the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition. It is precisely this final element, which has rarely been taken into account by modern scholars who, in

⁷⁶ Nik.Chon., pp. 583/4-584/20.

⁷⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 584/21-33.

accepting Niketas' view without examining the principles under which it was formulated, have reconstructed a corrupt and decadent Byzantium, which was in effect ready to self-destruct on the eve of the Fourth Crusade.⁷⁸

For Niketas, the starting point of the decline and decadence that led to the fall of the empire was tyranny. In the strictest sense of the term, tyranny is defined as the illegal seizure of authority. Early Byzantine political philosophy had successfully applied the traditional Greek philosophical and literary distinction between kingship and tyranny to the Christian Roman Empire.⁷⁹ Thus for the Byzantines, tyranny meant the opposite of *basileia* and was a notion loathed by Byzantine authors such as Theophylact of Orchid, Michael Psellos and Niketas himself.⁸⁰ Within the chronological limits of Niketas' *Historia* (1118-ca.1207), a modern historian has documented fifty-eight insurrections against the government.⁸¹ Although modern scholars make a distinction between rebellious movements in the course of which the

⁷⁸ This was noted by the historian of the Fourth Crusade, Thomas Madden in his article 'The Fires of the Fourth Crusade in Constantinople, 1203-1204: A Damage Assessment', *BZ* 85 (1992), p. 72, n. 4: 'There is a tendency among some to find in actuality inevitability. Thus Constantinople's fall in 1204 proves that no other outcome was possible. The events of the previous year, or even the previous century, are read backward from the crusader conquest...The reasoning transforms wealthy, powerful and populous Constantinople into a doddering and decrepit relic of a failed empire, simply marking time until its impending demise. It also characterises the professed amazement of Crusader, Byzantine, Pope and King at the outcome of the events into simple foolishness, affectation or insincerity.' See also the view of Paul Magdalino, who justifiably criticised modern historians for their willingness to accept the judgments of Byzantine historians, which were based on the long-rejected medieval notions of historical causation. In his study of the twelfth century, he demonstrated that this was clearly the case with Niketas' assessment of the crucial reign of Manuel Komnenos (1143-1180). Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 1-18.

⁷⁹ F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, II, Washington 1966, pp. 659-753. For tyranny in Ancient Greece see: H. Berve, *Die Tyrannis bei den Griechen*, Munich 1967; C. Mosse, *La tyrannie dans la Grèce Antique*, Paris 1989²; J. F. McGlew, *Tyranny and Political Culture in Ancient Greece*, London 1993.

⁸⁰ P. Gautier (ed.), *Théophylact d'Achrida, discours, traités, poésies*, CFHB, I, Thessaloniki 1980, pp. 195ff., 199ff, 201-02; Michael Psellos, II, pp. 94-109 (on the accession of Isaakios I Komnenos); Nik.Chon., pp. 12/88-89, 462/53-56. See discussions in M. V. Anastos, 'Byzantine Political Theory: its Classical Precedents and Legal Embodiments', *The past in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture*, ed. S. Vryonis, Malibu 1978, pp. 13-54; S. Vryonis, 'Byzantine Imperial Authority: Theory and Practice in the eleventh century', *La notion d'autorité au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, (eds.), G. Makdisi & J. Sourdél-Thomine, Paris 1982, pp. 141-61; A. Savvides, 'Some Crucial Issues concerning XI-XIII century Byzantine Internal History from Basil II's Death to the Recapture of Constantinople (A.D. 1025-1261)', *Βυζαντινός Λόγος* 5-6 (1991-92), pp. 103-22; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 178-90 and works of J. Hoffmann, *Rudimente von Territorialstaaten im byzantinischen Reich (1071-1210). Untersuchungen über Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen und ihr Verhältnis zu Kaiser und Reich*, Munich 1974; K. Bourdara, *Καθοσίωσις και τυραννίς κατά τους Μέσους Βυζαντινούς Χρόνους*, I, *Μακεδονική Δυναστεία (867-1056)*, Athens 1981, II, *(1056-1081)*, Athens 1984.

⁸¹ Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 103-56. See the analysis of Lilie, 'Des Kaisers Macht', p. 110ff who argues that the fundamental cause of the weakness of the central government was its failure to provide a constitutional basis for the Komnenian system of government.

insurgents seek to attain the Byzantine throne and separatist movements aimed at local independence, the Byzantines saw no such difference.

Niketas consistently applies the term tyrant to usurpers who have succeeded in attaining the throne, to those who attempted but failed, to foreign (unlawful in his own mind) rulers, and to leaders of separatist movements within Byzantium.⁸² One of the main themes running through the a-text is the catastrophic effect of this phenomenon on the Byzantine empire. Indeed, when revising his text in the second decade of the thirteenth century, Niketas worked backwards from the fall in 1204 in order to trace the beginnings of the collapse of Byzantium's political system and illustrate the progressive deterioration of Byzantine society through the decades of the twelfth century.

It is no coincidence that the historian develops the theme of tyranny only in the a-text.⁸³ The examples cited here are found in the revised version of the *Historia* (all the rest are taken from the post-1204 period). Having narrated the events of the successful coup of Alexios Angelos in 1195, Niketas seeks the reasons for their occurrence in human nature: man's inherent wickedness and love for greater glory (μοχθηρία γνώμης καὶ δόξης ἔρωτι). Having condemned the deplorable actions of Alexios, he attempts to draw a direct link between Byzantium's successive tyrannical governments and the quality of its citizens. The historian alleges that henceforth men refrained from forming close friendships and abandoned old friends. They became suspicious of one another and citing the example of recent events, feared intimacy, 'for if a brother is not safe, what man is?'⁸⁴

The detrimental effects of tyrannical government on the people of Byzantium can be clearly illustrated in the following episode. When the sultan of Ikonion, Kayhusraw, raided Byzantine territory in 1198/99, he carried off with him a multitude of captives. These were settled in villages and apportioned fertile lands around the area of Philomilion. The sultan's treatment was so humane, says Niketas that even those Byzantines who had not been captured flocked to Philomilion. This is then explained by the lawlessness (ἀνομία) rampant in Byzantine lands and Niketas claims that the frequent tyrannies made people abandon a prudent lifestyle. The

⁸² Kazhdan, *Concordance*, 13, R745.

⁸³ This does not, however, mean that Niketas was a supporter of the tyrannical governments established in Byzantium prior to 1204. On the contrary, the historian had already shown his aversion to this phenomenon in the b-text. See especially the speech of John II Komnenos (43/54-70) and the author's heartrending lamentation for the plight of the imperial throne (498/29ff).

⁸⁴ Nik.Chon., pp. 453/10-454/20 alt. b.

majority were stripped bare by robberies and seizures and therefore saw no reason to behave with moderation towards their own countrymen.⁸⁵ The historian even assumes that these effects were felt far beyond the borders of Byzantium! Fratricide (ἀδελφοκτονία), claims Niketas, spread as a pattern, model and general law from the 'queen of cities', affecting the neighbouring Turks, Russians, Serbs, and Hungarians. Foreign nations witnessed insurrections and murders and their citizens turned against one another. The sons of the Seljuk sultan Kilij Arslan II continually fought against each other,⁸⁶ insurrections and factional strife plagued the Russians,⁸⁷ and the sons of Serbian ruler Stephan Nemanja competed against each other for the throne of Serbia.⁸⁸

Having stated the reasons for 'corruption', the historian then proceeds to what can only be described as a fanatical attack against his own people. In warfare, the Byzantines display nothing except their idleness and stupidity; they are slow to react to foreign threats,⁸⁹ inexperienced,⁹⁰ and cowardly.⁹¹ More generally, the Byzantines are described as greedy, avaricious and grasping;⁹² people who prize their own possessions but defile what belongs to God.⁹³ The historian sees in bishops and monks the worst elements of Byzantine society. When the empire was being pressed hard by the Vlacho-Bulgarians, Niketas reproaches these individuals for their inactivity and negligence in the face of such obvious chastisement from God. Drawing a negative comparison with the Homeric Greeks, he points that the seer Kalchas had warned the Greeks as to the cause of pestilence in the camp and advised them on the means of deliverance, even though the leader of the Greek forces, Agamemnon, would be angry (*Iliad*, 1.54 ff.).⁹⁴ The monks, says Niketas, were in fact God-haters (θεομισεῖς) who only chased after imperial banquets and stuffed themselves with rich dishes.⁹⁵

⁸⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 495/47-496/53 om. b.

⁸⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 521/80-84 (86-87, 89-95 om. b.)

⁸⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 523/43-49 om. b.

⁸⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 532/10-20 om. b.

⁸⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 482/7-8 om. b.

⁹⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 503/36 alt. b.

⁹¹ Nik.Chon., p. 471/6-12 om. b.

⁹² Nik.Chon., p. 475/26ff.

⁹³ Nik.Chon., p. 556/75-76.

⁹⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 473/39-44 om. b.

⁹⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 558/31-35. See also the incident with a monk from the monastery of Antigonos who failed to disclose to the residents of Kouperion the contents of a governmental letter warning of imminent Cuman attacks. The monk was afraid that the festival organised there would be dispersed and thus he would not have the opportunity to tax the fair: p. 500/78-92 om. b.

He brilliantly exploits the negative comparison between the wealthy and effeminate Greeks and the authentic strength of the uncorrupted barbarians.⁹⁶ An excellent example is offered by the reception of the envoys of the German Emperor, Henry VI by Alexios III on Christmas day 1196. In that episode the strength and military might of the unadorned Germans is compared negatively to the wealth and effeminacy of the Greeks in an obvious attempt to demonstrate the weakness and incompetence of the Byzantines in the face of foreign aggression.⁹⁷ Again, according to the historian, the Fourth Crusade confidently sailed through the Byzantine seas because the westerners knew very well that the Byzantine emperors did little else except succumb to drunken revelry, thus turning Constantinople into another Sybaris.⁹⁸ Niketas admires the loyalty and reverence, which the Latins show to their rulers, and when he compares this with Byzantine practice, he denounces his scheming compatriots in the harshest terms. The Byzantines are capable of slaying their own mothers (μητρόλεθροι), and they constitute a nation deprived of sense – one that produces disgraceful children and lawless sons.⁹⁹

The situation drastically deteriorates after 1204 as the splintered states of Byzantium succeed only in promoting factional strife and local independence among their own people. Niketas sadly notes that instead of uniting to oppose the enemy they fixate on electing emperors and instead of fighting the Latins, they fight one another. For the historian, the *polyarchy* that had spread far and wide across the Byzantine lands was the source of all evils. More importantly, it was the outcome of the depravity and corruption of the Byzantine people.¹⁰⁰ In the western provinces, they established evil tyrannies (κακοδαίμονας τυραννίδας) instead of taking up arms

⁹⁶ K. Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren im Weltbild der Byzantiner*, Munich 1955, pp. 115ff. See the example of the seventh-century historian of the reign of Maurice (582-602), Theophylact Simokattes (*The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, trans. M. & M. Whitby, Oxford 1986, p. 192) and his description of the Taugast, i.e. the Chinese just and discreet mode of life. Also the eleventh-century historian, Michael Attaleiates, p. 197, who compares the corrupt and lawless Byzantines to the 'barbarians' who have high regard for justice and maintain their ancestral laws unsullied. Finally, the fourteenth-century historian Nikephoros Gregoras (*Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, CSHB, Bonn 1829-55, v. I, p. 31ff), and his description of the customs of the Tartars. The simplicity and purity of their way of life compares negatively with the unjust and strife-ridden society of Byzantium.

⁹⁷ Nik.Chon., p.477/66 ff. om. b

⁹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 541/54-56.

⁹⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 642/81-85.

¹⁰⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 625/24-46.

against their enemies because they had been corrupted by wantonness and other senseless actions.¹⁰¹

Seen from within this context, Niketas' identification of the *major cause* (αἰτιώτατον) of the empire's collapse assumes its proper significance. This passage is, of course, only found in the a-text and unsurprisingly appears during the discussion of the reign of Alexios III in the form of a commentary to the defection of Michael Komnenos Doukas to the sultan of Ikonion, Rukn al-Din (1200). In Niketas' view, the Komnenos family was the major cause of the empire's destruction; their ruthless ambition for power, their incessant and catastrophic rebellions and their treacherous defections to foreign lands weakened the empire from within, undermined imperial supremacy and invited foreign intervention.¹⁰² The historian here means the extended Komnenos/Angelos family and implies the series of successful coups, the multitude of unsuccessful uprisings both in the capital and in the provinces, as well as the standard practice of defecting to foreign and often inimical states to seek support in opposition to the government (οἱ ἐκ Κομνηνῶν γεγονάσιν ἀφιστάμενοι καὶ βασιλειῶντες).

To further strengthen his argument in the a-text, Niketas introduces countless images of destruction, misfortune, illness, and the fragility of human existence. He makes brilliant use of tragic literary metaphors, which along with his continuous foreboding, create an impression of inescapable disaster for the protagonists of the story.¹⁰³ Before rendering an account Alexios III's dealings with the German Emperor, Henry VI, Niketas adds a preliminary note to the effect that the empire had only just begun to recover from the continual attacks of the Turks when this new evil was introduced: 'The events expected to come were more terrible than the ones at present, and if the partial loss of freedom was distressing, the attacks of the western nations permitted us to imagine the oppressive slavery to be imposed on us all.'¹⁰⁴ When the Russians assisted the Byzantines against the Cuman raids in 1200/01, they 'awarded the utterly ruined Romans a respite from evil.'¹⁰⁵ When Alexios III made a wrong strategic decision, he 'was guided, I believe, by the evil power that ever led

¹⁰¹ Nik.Chon., p. 637/31-40.

¹⁰² Nik.Chon., p. 529/25-31 om. b.

¹⁰³ For these traits in Niketas see Kazhdan & Franklin, *Byzantine Literature*, pp. 263-73.

¹⁰⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 475/26-31 om. b.

¹⁰⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 523/39-40 om. b.

Roman affairs to their ruination.’¹⁰⁶ These kinds of images abound: ‘not a single year passed without bringing some public horror’,¹⁰⁷ ‘close behind this evil there followed an even greater one’,¹⁰⁸ or ‘not even a minor victory smiled upon the Romans, nor did they have the illusion of a trophy’,¹⁰⁹ ‘what followed was no different than what came before, for the way of life remained the same – existence was languid and the spirit was forever weakened.’¹¹⁰

If we assimilate this ominous commentary with the almost entirely negative judgments of leading individuals that Niketas offers us in the a-text, there emerges a frightening depiction of Byzantine society in the late twelfth century.¹¹¹ Yet it is clear that Niketas, much like Attaleiates before him, sought to explain Byzantium’s defeat in terms of the shortcomings of its own people. As we have seen, this principle is one of the cornerstones of the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition; a trend that commences as far back as Homer. Its intrinsic value can be traced to the idea of learning through suffering, a theme frequently encountered in Greek literature. In turn, it is precisely this idea of learning through suffering, which in a Christian context may be correlated to sin and divine retribution that defines the didactic purpose of historical narratives.¹¹² This was what Niketas had in mind when he declared that it was possible to reproach the corrupt Byzantines, ‘for memory, like a fan that rekindles the remaining embers of the good fire buried into the soul into a bright flame, arouses caution against committing the same error in the future.’¹¹³ This

¹⁰⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 510/48-50 om. b.

¹⁰⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 401/20-21.

¹⁰⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 463/79-81 alt. b.

¹⁰⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 472/31-33 om. b.

¹¹⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 493/64-66 om. b.

¹¹¹ Later Byzantine writers make little or no attempt to explain the events of 1204. Skoutariotes, p. 447, paraphrases one sentence from Niketas’ text indicating that the collapse was the result of divine retribution. Akropolites, pp. 5-6, lists Niketas’ ‘direct causes’, i.e. the flight of Prince Alexios (IV) to the West and his agreement with the Pope and the crusaders. Finally, Ephraim, much like Akropolites, emphasises the circumstances immediately preceding the fall.

¹¹² This was the innate purpose and value of historical writing as defined by the ancients. See Polybius, *The Histories*, trans. W. R. Paton, Loeb Classical Library, IV, London 1925, p. 371. A similar motif is found in the preface of Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 5: ‘Our narrative will in fact make a brief attempt to reveal such causes at the of the whole work with a didactic purpose.’

¹¹³ Nik.Chon., p. 585/38-41: καὶ ἡ μνήμη, ὅσα δὴ καὶ ῥιπὶς τὸ παραμένον ἐν ψυχῇ καὶ ἐνθαπτόμενον ἐμπύρευμα τοῦ καλοῦ κατὰ ζῶσαν ἔτι φλόγα πυρὸς ἀναθάλπουσα, τὴν ἐφ’ ὁμοίοις ἐσέπειτα διαμαρτίαν φυλάττεσθαι διανίστησι. For this idea in other Byzantine historians see again Eustathios, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 141: ‘It was through these evils that those of us who were more subtle in understanding came to learn.’ Also the earlier account of the sack of Thessaloniki by the Arabs in 904. *Ioannis Caminiatae De expugnatione Thessalonicae*, ed. G.

didactic purpose defined Niketas' argumentation for the collapse of the empire and in consequence determined his treatment of the crucial time period leading to 1204.

This last point brings us back to the introduction. As we have seen through our comparison of the versions of the *Historia*, Niketas can hardly be viewed as an objective and critical observer of his own times. If modern historians still wish to accept his reconstruction of the Byzantine empire in the twelfth century, then they have to choose which version to follow and which to discard. However, it is clear that Niketas' account as it has come down to us in both versions of the text, in no way represents an accurate and complete picture of the times. Most modern historians would agree with the statement that human nature does not in essence change throughout the ages. But the ideology and philosophy of history does. Thus before attempting to extract the causes of the collapse of the Byzantine empire in 1204 from a Byzantine text, the argument and purpose of the historian who wrote it should be first sought.

Niketas had taken a bold step when he attempted to explain 1204 on two levels: the immediate political circumstances and the lethal disease that had infected Byzantine society. In describing the origins of the problem, he utilises the concepts of imperial misrule and divine retribution in harmony, not as two opposing factors. The emperor does not stand isolated from Byzantine society; he is very much a part of it. His actions guide, motivate and influence his people to a degree that none of us can fathom.¹¹⁴ At the same time, the universal providence of God is never questioned, and Niketas emphatically affirms that 1204 was a chastening, a punishment sent from God. Yet it is important to recognise that in Niketas' eyes the 'sin' was tyrannical government and divine retribution appeared in the form of the iron-clad knights of the west. By the articulation of such an idea, Niketas is certainly reflecting his own convictions as well as the beliefs of his culture, which almost instinctively sought the culprits of 1204 within the borders of Byzantium.

Böhlig, CFHB, Berlin & New York 1973. Here the concept of punishment is used as a lesson for future generations: [...] τοῦτο ἡμεῖς παθόντες ἄλλοις ὑπόδειγμα ποιησώμεθα (p. 15/29).

¹¹⁴ For the significance of emulation see Chapter II and Blemmydes' remarks on the influence of the culpable conduct of the emperor on his people: E. Barker, *Social and Political thought in Byzantium*, Oxford 1957, p. 156.

CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT

Historiography, undoubtedly one of the great accomplishments of Byzantine civilization, is a field of Byzantine literary heritage, which on the surface appears to have been sufficiently studied. The pioneering work of Karl Krumbacher, which appeared at the close of the nineteenth century, has since been considerably supplemented by significant studies, most notably, Herbert Hunger's massive compilation and the contributions of Gyula Moravcsik, Hans-Georg Beck and others.¹ Significant contributions have also been made relating to historical writing as such, the writers themselves, as well as their audience.² The origins of Byzantine historiography have been explored and the influence of ancient authors has been elucidated.³ Moreover, different periods of Byzantine literary production have been looked at more closely,⁴ and individual historians have received a great deal of attention from modern scholars, most notably Procopius of Caesarea,⁵ Anna

¹ K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (537-1453)*, Munich 1897²; E. Colonna, *Gli storici bizantini*, I, *Storici profani*, Naples 1956; Hunger, *Literatur*, I; G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, *Die byzantinischen Quellen der Geschichte der Türkvolker*, Berlin 1958² (repr. 1983); H.-G. Beck, 'Zur byzantinischen Mönchchronik', *Speculum historiale. Geschichte im Spiegel von Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsdeutung*, (eds.), C. Bauer, L. Boehm & M. Müller, Munich 1978, pp. 188-97; J.-L. van Dieten 'Die byzantinische Literatur-eine Literatur ohne Geschichte', *Historische Zeitschrift* 231 (1980), pp. 101-09; J. Karayannopoulos & G. Weiss, *Quellenkunde zur Geschichte von Byzanz (324-1453)*, Weisbaden 1982; A. Cameron, 'Byzantine Historiography', *DMA* 6 (1986), p. 242ff and bibliography therein.

² Most significantly: A. Kazhdan, 'Der Mensch in der byzantinischen Literaturgeschichte', *JÖB* 28 (1979), pp. 1-21 and J. N. Ljubarskij, 'Man in Byzantine Historiography from John Malalas to Michael Psellos', *DOP* 46 (1992), pp. 177-86. See also: J. Haldon, 'Jargon vs the Facts? Byzantine Historical Writing and Contemporary debates', *BMGS* 9 (1984-85), pp. 95-132.

³ G. Moravcsik, 'Klassizismus im byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung', *Polychronion Festschrift für Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1966, pp. 366-77; H. Hunger, 'On Imitation (μίμησις) of Antiquity in Byzantine Literature', *DOP* 23-24 (1969-70), pp. 15-38; P. Wirth, 'Die sprachliche Situation in dem umrissenen Zeitalter. Renaissance des Attizismus. Herausbildung der neugriechischen Volkssprache', *XVe congrès international d'études byzantines, Rapports et co-rapports*, II, 1 Athens 1976, pp. 1-54.

⁴ See especially A.P. Kazhdan, & S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the eleventh and twelfth Centuries*, Cambridge 1984 (for the eleventh and twelfth centuries); A. P. Kazhdan & L.F. Sherry, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)*, Athens 1999; A. Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι, Α' (4^{ος}-7^{ος} αι.)*, Athens 1997, *Β' (8^{ος}-10^{ος} αι.)*, Athens 2002.

⁵ See especially three major monographs dedicated to Procopius: B. Rubin, *Prokopios von Kaisareia*, Stuttgart 1954; J. Evans, *Procopius*, New York 1972; A. Cameron, *Procopius and the sixth century*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1985.

Komnene⁶ and Michael Psellos.⁷ As far as the study of historiography has progressed, we are still far from exhaustive research and critical understanding of many aspects of Byzantine historical writing. When we consider that due to the paucity of the survival of alternative source material, narrative historical accounts remain our most important tool for the study of Byzantine civilization, it is of critical importance that we maintain our interest and advance our knowledge in the field.

Most recently there has been an attempt to view Byzantine historiography as the creators themselves viewed it.⁸ This approach has much to recommend it. For one, the aim and guiding principles of Byzantine historiography were very different from our own. The framework of Byzantine history was essentially a narrative of events focusing on the deeds and lives of leading individuals. There was little or no room for discussions on military, religious or political institutions or analysis of social conditions and cultural achievements, which are today considered central to historical writing. Thus while the overriding aim of current historical writing is interpretation, for the Byzantines it was the achievement of restoring life to a historical figure and thus creating a feeling of first-hand contact with the past. Indeed, Byzantine historians regularly take us into the council chambers of the imperial palace and on to the battlefields, but also into the agora, the streets and fields and the ordinary anecdotal life of the empire. Second, Byzantine historians, following the Thucydidean model, wrote contemporary or near contemporary history. Much of their historical accounts are based on personal observation, information from eyewitnesses and the connections they had to individuals of political significance. As a consequence, the person of the historian frequently intrudes into the narrative in the role of a primary eyewitness to the events described.⁹

Third, Byzantine historians display a common conception of history repeated over and over again in their elaborate prefaces as well as in *ad hoc* references throughout their works. The prefaces were modelled after the introductory remarks of

⁶ G. Buckler, *Anna Comnena. A Study*, Oxford 1929, (repr. 1968); R. Dalven, *Anna Comnena*, New York 1972 and the recent volume: *Anna Komnene and her Times*, ed. T. Gouma-Peterson, New York & London 2000 (with rich bibliographical references).

⁷ J. Sykoutris, 'Zum Geschichtswerk des Psellos', *BZ* 30 (1929-30), pp. 61-67; J. Hussey, 'Michael Psellus, The Byzantine Historian', *Speculum* 10 (1935), pp. 81-90; R. Anastasi, *Studi sulla 'Chronographia' di Michele Psello*, Catania 1969; A. Gadolin, *A theory of history and society with special reference to the Chronographia of Michael Psellos: 11th century Byzantium*, Stockholm 1970.

⁸ See for example: D. Afinogenov, 'Some Observations on genres of Byzantine Historiography', *Byz* 62 (1992), pp. 13-33.

⁹ R. Macrides, 'The Historian in the History', Φυλλάριον. *Studies in Honour of Robert Browning*, ed. C. Constantinides, *et al.* Venice 1996, pp. 205-24.

ancient Greek historians.¹⁰ Theoretically speaking the sole objective of history was the truth – σκοπιμώτατον τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔχουσα – in the words of Niketas.¹¹ History is written so that the memory of the deeds of men, both those deserving praise and those that incur censure, might not be swept away by the forces of time.¹² In this sense, the value of history lies in its didactic purpose; it is a sophisticated vehicle to guide human behaviour; a most honourable enterprise invented for the common benefit of mankind.¹³ These principles then are very different from our own, and it is precisely for this reason that narrative histories merit separate investigation. What we shall attempt to do here is delineate the principles and techniques that lay beneath Niketas' representation of historical reality with the ultimate aim of gaining greater insight and critical understanding of the work he produced.

Sources

Our discussion of Niketas as a historian should begin with an examination of the source material from which he compiled his account. In general, Niketas' sources can be divided into three categories: written, oral, and visual. To the first category belong other historical accounts that cover the same time period, most notably those of John Kinnamos and Eustathios of Thessaloniki. Niketas also appears to have made extensive use of the vast reserves of imperial panegyric as well as bulletins from the battlefield, official governmental pamphlets and the information derived from the letters exchanged between the historian and his older brother, Michael, the metropolitan of Athens. It is important to note that only on rare occasions does our historian quote official state documents, even though by virtue of his position at court he must have had access to them. To the second category belong Niketas' own personal experiences, eyewitness oral communications from various informants, popular rumours and court gossip.¹⁴ Finally, Niketas often utilises visual evidence to

¹⁰ H. Lieberlich, *Studien zu den Proömien in der griechischen und byzantinischen Geschichtschreibung*, II, Munich 1899; A. J. Toynbee, *Greek Historical Thought from Homer to the Age of Heraclius*, London 1924.

¹¹ Nik.Chon., p. 3/49; Psellos, *Chronographie*, I, p. 130: οὐ γὰρ ψευσαίμην τὴν ἱστορίαν, ἥς τὸ κράτιστον ἡ ἀλήθεια. Also Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. C.B. Hase, CSHB, Paris 1819, p. 3; Anna Komnene, III, p. 196; Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 13.

¹² Anna Komnene, I, p. 3; Attaleiates, p. 227; Nik.Chon., p. 1/5ff; Kinnamos, p. 4.

¹³ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 18; Kinnamos, p. 3; Nik.Chon., p. 1/5ff.

¹⁴ R. Maisano, 'Tipologia delle fonti di Niceta Coniata (libri I-VIII)', *Storia poesia e pensiero nel mondo antico. Studi in onore di Marcello Gigante*, Napoli 1994, pp. 391-405.

provide additional information about places, events and individuals throughout the narrative.

A further distinction that needs to be made is that while the first part of the *Historia* (books I-VIII) covering the period between 1118-1180 shows close dependence on written sources; the second part (books XI-XXI) 1180-ca. 1206/7 appears to have been based more on oral testimony and personal observations. This difference is due to the fact that Niketas did not have personal experience of events prior to 1180, while after that date he was essentially rendering an account of his own era. As a consequence, Niketas the historian of the reigns of John II and Manuel I Komnenos is to be distinguished from Niketas the historian of the post 1180 era, as the narration of these latter years is often more detailed, insightful and profound. Indeed, for the earlier period, the author shows a clear detachment from his subject. John II is presented almost as a legendary hero of a distant age, while Manuel Komnenos, who despite giving the impression of being closer to the author, is still far from his grasp. On the other hand, from 1180 or better still 1185 onwards, the reader is left with the impression of having read contemporary history virtually as it unfolded. With this in mind, we shall begin by examining Niketas' use of written sources.

1) Historical Accounts

One of Niketas' main sources for the reigns of John II and Manuel I Komnenos was the historical work of John Kinnamos.¹⁵ Although in his preface Niketas declares that he has chosen to begin his own account with the events that followed the death of Alexios I Komnenos in 1118 because this is the date where previous historians left off, he nevertheless seems to betray his knowledge of Kinnamos' historical work a few lines before.¹⁶ The historian states that since he is

¹⁵ This observation was made as early as the nineteenth century by H. Marczali, *Ungars Geschichtsquellen im Zeitalter der Arpaden*, Berlin 1882, p. 134. Then followed N. Iorga, 'Medallions d'histoire littéraire byzantine', *Byz* 2 (1925), pp. 287-9; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, pp. 272, 274. Detailed analysis in V. Grecu, 'Nicetas Choniates a-t-il connu l'histoire de Jean Kinnamos?', *REB* 7 1949, pp. 194-204; and Maisano, 'Fonti di Niceta Coniata', pp. 399-402; Idem, 'Rinnovamento della tradizione storiografica bizantina nel XII secolo', *Storia e tradizione culturale a Bizanzio fra XI e XII secolo*, Naples 1993, pp. 122-26. This view has not been unanimously accepted. See the objections of F. Chalandon, *Les Comnène, II. Jean II Comnène (1118-1143) et Manuel I Comnène (1143-1180)*, Paris 1912 (repr. 1962) p. XXVI; and Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 447.

¹⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 4/66-69.

the first to have undertaken such a task, it is like attempting to traverse a desolate and unfrequented road, which is more difficult than following the footsteps of others or not straying from the ‘imperial highway’.¹⁷ This final and rather enigmatic remark is clarified in the variant readings offered in different manuscripts of Niketas’ work, where the author (or a copyist) tells us that this is a reference to the historical work of others (λέγω δὴ τῆς ἐτέρων ἱστορίας).¹⁸ The allusion to the ‘imperial highway’ fits all too well with Kinnamos’ uncritical history of Manuel Komnenos. A plausible explanation for this contradiction is that Kinnamos’ work, being unfinished, circulated only among imperial secretaries; a group to which both Kinnamos and Niketas belonged.¹⁹ It is, moreover, quite possible that Niketas knew Kinnamos personally since he testified to the latter’s presence inside the imperial tent of Andronikos I Komnenos at Lopadion in the *Historia*²⁰ and identified him as one of the imperial secretaries in the *Panoplia Dogmatike*.²¹

The similarities concerning the language utilised in both accounts indicate that Niketas used Kinnamos as a source.²² Below are some characteristic examples taken from passages where both historians cover the same ground²³:

εἰρήσεται δέ μοι τὰ μὲν Ἰωάννου κατ’ ἐπιτομὴν ἐν κεφαλαίῳ (Kin. 5/4)	ἐν κεφαλαιώδεσι δ’ ἐπιτομαῖς (Nik.Chon. 4/73)
Σκύθαι γὰρ πανστρατὶ τὸν Ἰστρον διαβάντες (Kin. 7/16)	Σκυθῶν διαβάντων τὸν Ἰστρον (Nik.Chon. 13/39-40)
ἄρμα ἀργύρου μὲν πεπηγμένον, χρυσῷ δὲ κατακόρως ἀλημιμένον (Kin. 13/16-17)	ἄρμα διελημμένον ἀργύρῳ (Nik.Chon. 18/78-79)

¹⁷ For the figurative use of this phrase see F. Tailliez, ‘ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ ΟΔΟΣ. Les valeurs d’un terme mystique et le prix de son histoire littéraire’, *Orientalia Christiana periodica* 13 (1947), pp. 229-354; Pontani, *Commentary to Narrazione cronologica*, II, pp. 748-49, n. 114.

¹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 4/61-64: ἐπεὶ καὶ ἄλλως νῦν πρῶτως ἡμεῖς τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἐπιβαίνομεν τῇσδε, οἷά τινα ἐρήμην καὶ ἀστιβῆ διέναι ἐγχειροῦντες ὁδόν, ὃ καὶ δύσεργόν ἐστι καὶ πολλῷ ὑπερκείμενον τοῦ ἱχνεσιν ἐτέρων προωδευκότων ἐφομαρτεῖν ἢ γοῦν ὡς διὰ λείας καὶ βασιλικῆς βαδίζειν ὁδοῦ (λέγω δὴ τῆς ἐτέρων ἱστορίας add. A^{mg} PH) εὐθυπόρως τε καὶ ἀπλανῶς.

¹⁹ Grecu, ‘Nicétas Choniates’, p. 202. Grecu placed great significance on Niketas’ choice of words and translated him in the following manner: ἐς τὸνδε τὸν ἄνακτα τὸ λέγειν συνεπέραντο ὅποσοι τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν τῇ συγγραφῇ προδήλως ἐπέβαλον (Nik.Chon., 4/68-69) ‘tous les historiens antérieurs qui ont publié leurs ouvrages ont cessé leur narration avec cet empereur.’

²⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 331/1.

²¹ *Panoplia Dogmatike*, 27, (ed. Eustratiades), p. κα’: τῷ Κιννάμῳ Ἰωάννῃ – ἦν δὲ οὗτος ἐκ τῶν λογίων γραμματέων τῆς βασιλείου αὐλῆς.

²² Grecu, ‘Nicétas Choniates’, pp. 200-01.

²³ In noting the similarities between Niketas and other authors, I have relied heavily on van Dieten, who in the notes to his edition, indicates each time Niketas covers the same ground with other authors and provides the reader with the respective reference.

ὁ μὲν σὺν τῷ σταυρικῷ προῆλθε σημείῳ (Kin. 13/20)	προῆγεν αὐτὸς σταυρικὸν σημεῖον χειριζόμενος (Nik. Chon., 19/94)
Ῥωμαίοις κατηκόνων πόλεις εἶλεν (Kin. 16/3)	κατήκοα Ῥωμαίοις πολίσματα χειρωσάμενον (Nik.Chon. 21/55)
τὴν Πασγούση καλουμένην λίμνην... αὕτη γὰρ δὴ ἐς ἄφατόν τι μῆκος καὶ εὖρος ἐκτεινομένη νήσους (Kin. 22/8-10)	τοῦ Πουσγούση καλουμένη λίμνη. αὕτη γὰρ εἰς ἀχανῆ καὶ μικροῦ θαλασσίαν χύσιν ἐκτεινομένη ἐν πολλοῖς νησίδας (Nik.Chon. 37/86-87)
ὁ δὲ τῆς αἰχμῆς τῷ στέρνῳ (Kin. 24/13)	τὴν μὲν αἰχμὴν τῷ στέρνῳ (Nik.Chon. 40/64)
ἤδη δὲ καὶ εἰς τοὺς παῖδας τοὺς αὐτοῦ καθάπερ τις πατρῶος διέβη κλῆρος (Kin. 54/1-2)	ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ βασιλειᾶν πατρόθεν Ἀνδρόνικος ὡς κλῆρον καταβὰν διεδέξατο (Nik.Chon. 280/36-37)
ὑπὸ θριάμβῳ τε πομπεύσας λαμπρὰ (Kin. 118/18)	τὸν θρίαμβον λαμπρότατα ...ἐπόμπευσεν (Nik.Chon. 93/60-61)
ἔγημεν ἀδελφιδῆν ὁ Στέφανος, Μαρίαν τὴν Ἰσαακίου τοῦ σεβαστοκράτορος παῖδα (Kin. 203/7-9)	Μαρίαν ἔγημε τὴν τούτου ἀνεψιάν, ἣν ὁ σεβαστοκράτωρ ἐφύτευσεν Ἰσαάκιος (Nik.Chon. 126/54-55)

More significant is the observation that Niketas' account is almost complementary to that of Kinnamos in the sense that where Kinnamos describes at length, Niketas is brief and where Kinnamos is epigrammatic, Niketas elaborates.²⁴ For example, Kinnamos devotes more than twenty-five pages to Manuel's expedition to Ikonion in 1146, while Niketas gives us but a brief summary.²⁵ Kinnamos' description of the repulsion of the Cuman raid by Manuel in 1148 takes up two whole pages, while Niketas dismisses the episode in two lines.²⁶ While Kinnamos makes brief mention of the conflict that broke out between the Byzantines and their Venetian allies during the siege of Corfu in 1148, Niketas narrates the episode in almost minute detail.²⁷ Niketas' account of the military expedition to Egypt in 1169 is far longer, more detailed and more descriptive than that of Kinnamos,²⁸ and he offers us far more information on the fascinating adventures of Andronikos Komnenos in the east.²⁹

Niketas' account is not only complementary to that of Kinnamos, but in a sense the author of the *Historia* enriches the narration of events with a descriptive quality that Kinnamos cannot possibly attain. A prime example is the speech

²⁴ Grecu, 'Nicétas Choniates', pp. 201-02.

²⁵ Kinnamos, pp. 38/6-63/20; Nik.Chon., pp. 52/29-53/57.

²⁶ Kinnamos, pp. 93/1-95/21; Nik.Chon., p. 78/40-42.

²⁷ Kinnamos, p. 98/8-15; Nik.Chon., pp. 85/40-87/95.

²⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 159/18-168/78; Kinnamos, pp. 278/6-280/10.

²⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 138/28-142/41; Kinnamos, pp. 250/1-251/6.

attributed to the dying emperor John II – a speech related by both historians. Where Kinnamos turns immediately to the problem of the succession, Niketas, perhaps in an effort to bring out the agony of the dying emperor, begins with a emotional recollection of the military accomplishments of John Komnenos before moving on to the problem of the succession, all the while enriching his prose with scriptural terminology.³⁰ That Niketas used Kinnamos as a source on this occasion is confirmed by the following common traits: they both refer to the irascible character of Manuel's elder brother, Isaakios, the premonition of Manuel's accession to the throne as well as the virtues of the future emperor.³¹ Moreover, in-depth analysis confirms that on several occasions, Niketas alters the vocabulary used by Kinnamos and modifies certain passages in a way that displays greater literary skill.³²

However, it is also evident that Niketas not only modifies certain passages, but often manipulates the information derived from Kinnamos, or for that matter all his written sources. Indeed, the historian frequently borrows specific incidents from his sources, but alters the location, time, circumstances, and the words exchanged among the participants. His reason for doing thus should be sought primarily in his conviction that history was above all the imaginative creation of its author, and that its essential aim was to be didactic. In the case of Kinnamos, this can be clearly illustrated in the following episode. In their accounts of the Second Crusade (1147-49), both Niketas and Kinnamos chronicle the episode where Manuel Komnenos appoints his officials to register the crusaders, but because they are simply too numerous his officials give up and return unsuccessful.³³ There is, however, a discrepancy between the two versions of events. While Kinnamos places the episode on the banks of the Danube, Niketas places it in Constantinople and links it with the crossing of the troops to Asia Minor.

While it could be the case that Niketas is simply drawing on a different account, the accumulation of such discrepancies between the historian and his sources make this less likely. Thus a different explanation should be sought. In this case, it is significant to note that Niketas' account of the German crusaders' march through the

³⁰ Maisano, 'Fonti di Niceta Coniata', pp. 400-01.

³¹ Nik.Chon., p. 45/15-17, 27-29, 29-46; Kinnamos, p. 29/10, p.28/10-14, 5-10.

³² Maisano, 'Rinnovamento storiografica Bizantina', pp. 122-26. The author analyses the passages concerning Michael Kourkouas' elevation to the patriarchal throne (1143) and John II's unfulfilled intention to enter Jerusalem, Nik.Chon., pp. 51/93-97, 39/29-40; Kinnamos, pp. 33/3-10, 25/17-19.

³³ Kinnamos, p. 69/15-20; Nik.Chon., pp. 65/5-66/9.

Balkans is entirely focused on one episode, the overflowing of the river Melas on the Thracian plain and the destruction it wrought on the crusader camp in September 1147. According to the historian this was clearly a chastisement sent from God to punish the Germans for their mistreatment of the native Byzantines. Seen from within this context, the episode on the Danube simply did not fit in with Niketas' scheme of events, and thus he placed it later in the narrative, once the Germans had arrived in Constantinople and submitted to the will of the Byzantine emperor.

Niketas, moreover, frequently rejects the testimony of Kinnamos and offers a different and often conflicting version of events. This trend becomes especially pronounced in the discussion of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, since Niketas and Kinnamos vary considerably in their judgements of the emperor. Kinnamos, who composed his account within two years after Manuel's death and who was still a secretary at the imperial court at the time, quite naturally wrote in a spirit of uncritical admiration for the emperor, whose son was sitting on the throne of Byzantium. Niketas, on the other hand, had the benefit of hindsight, and for version a, the freedom and perhaps a greater reason to criticise the great Manuel Komnenos. Thus according to Niketas, the fall of Manuel's chief ministers, Theodore Styppeiotes and Alexios Axouch was brought about largely by the machinations of their rivals,³⁴ while for Kinnamos, these individuals were guilty of treason.³⁵ The failure of the military expedition to Sicily (1154) was according to Niketas, due to Manuel's erroneous belief in astrology, while for Kinnamos, it was entirely the fault of its commander Constantine Angelos.³⁶ For Niketas the successful outcome of the Hungarian expedition in 1167 was brought about by the 'superior generalship' of the general Andronikos Kontostephanos, who had ignored Manuel Komnenos' orders to desist from any military engagement.³⁷ Kinnamos, on the other hand, claims that the emperor himself directed Andronikos Kontostephanos in the preparations for battle.³⁸

Therefore in no way can it be said that Niketas merely copied Kinnamos; where he agreed with Kinnamos, he improved the latter's version from a literary point of view, and where he disagreed, he offered contradictory evidence. This does not mean that where Niketas disagrees with Kinnamos, his version should be

³⁴ Nik.Chon., pp. 111/26ff., 143/65ff.

³⁵ Kinnamos, pp. 184, 265-69.

³⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 95/29-96/53; Kinnamos, pp. 120/11-121/10.

³⁷ Nik.Chon., pp. 154/43-55.

³⁸ Kinnamos, pp. 270/5-8.

preferred, for there are many inaccuracies and errors in his account of the reign of Manuel Komnenos.³⁹ Moreover, it should not be assumed that because Niketas was a far more sophisticated writer than Kinnamos, he was also a more accurate historian.⁴⁰ All we have tried to show here is that Niketas utilised the historical work of Kinnamos in a selective and critical manner that is characteristic of the historian's use of his source material.

In much the same way, Niketas deals with his other major written source, Eustathios' account of the sack of Thessaloniki in 1185. Niketas used Eustathios extensively, not only for the events that transpired in Thessaloniki, but also for those in Constantinople during the period 1180-1182/3.⁴¹ He appears to have constructed his account of the siege and capture of Thessaloniki by the Normans almost entirely from Eustathios and it is to this author's work that he alludes to in the *Historia*, when he tells us that certain authors have described the sack of the city in their own detailed accounts.⁴² Moreover, Niketas was certainly in agreement with Eustathios' depiction of the character of Andronikos Komnenos as mutable and varied and also with the metropolitan's negative judgment of the patriarch Basil Kamateros and the governor of Thessaloniki, David Komnenos. Like Eustathios, Niketas places great emphasis on Andronikos' cruelty and provides us with identical motives as those offered by Eustathios for the tyrant's evil disposition.⁴³ Both historians depict Basil Kamateros as an opportunist and place the bulk of the blame for the capitulation of Thessaloniki to the Normans on its governor, David Komnenos.⁴⁴ Finally, the portrait of Alexios II as a young, inexperienced and immature sovereign, who cannot cope with the weighty responsibility of governing, is more or less identical in both authors.⁴⁵

³⁹ Chalandon, *Les Comnène*, II, pp. XXVIII-XXX; Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 19.

⁴⁰ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 18-20. For a comparison of Niketas with Kinnamos see H. von Kap-Herr, *Die abendländische Politik Kaiser Manuels, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Deutschland*, Strasbourg 1881 (repr. 1966), p. 119ff; Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, pp. 174-75.

⁴¹ This was noted long ago by G.L.F. Tafel, *Komnenen und Normannen. Beiträge zur Erforschung ihrer Geschichte in verdeutschten und erläuterten Urkunden des zwölften und dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 1870, pp. 232-44, and has since been widely accepted by scholars.

⁴² Nik.Chon., p. 306/59-60.

⁴³ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 14/31ff, 54/16ff.; Nik.Chon., pp. 276/36-37, 285/57-58, 311/91-312/4, 324/1-325/13.

⁴⁴ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 48/6-1 (on Basil Kamateros) 74ff. (on David Komnenos); Nik.Chon., pp. 262/1-6 (on Basil Kamateros) p. 297/5ff. (on David Komnenos).

⁴⁵ R. Gentile-Messina, 'Un princeps puer del XII secolo: Alessio II Comneno in Niceta Coniata ed Eustazio di Tessalonica', *Byzantina Mediolanensia*, (ed.), F. Conca, Soveria Mannelli 1996, pp. 187-98.

But as with Kinnamos, Niketas uses Eustathios selectively, at times rejecting his testimony, and where he follows him, a characteristic attempt at stylistic enhancement is evident. This can be illustrated in the following comparisons.

Θατέρω μὲν τοῖν ποδοῖν ἕκαστος τῶν
πολεμίων ἐπέβη τῆς Ἰλλυριῶν γῆς (Eust.
66/3-4)

ὁ νεανίας οὗτος Φαέδων ἀτέχνως τὸ
ἄρμα τῆς ἀρχῆς χειριζόμενος κακῶς τὸ
πᾶν διαθήσεται (Eust. 48/22-23)

ἕκαστος ἑαυτῷ κωμικώτερον τὸ παῖζε
παῖζ' ἐπὶ συμφοραῖς (Eust. 50/8-9)
καπνικοῦ καλύμματος τοῦ περὶ κεφαλὴν
(Eust. 50/26-27)

τοῦ κτύπου ἄκουε τὴν γραῖαν ἔλεγεν
(Eust. 98/23-24)

οἳ γε καὶ κατὰ φρεάτων ἀφιέντες
προρρέειν τὸν τοῦ κατ' αὐτοὺς ἀσκοῦ
προύχοντα πόδα, εἴτα ὑδρευόμενοι
ἔπινον τοῦ μiasμοῦ (Eust. 116/7-8)
καὶ λαλαγούντων καὶ συνήθη βαυζόντων
(Eust. 134/21-22)

οἱ μὲν Ἰταλοὶ Ἐπιδάμνου ἐπέβησαν
ὥσεί πτηνοὶ καὶ ἀέριοι μικροῦ τε
θάτερον τῶν ποδῶν περιβάδην
ἐκτείναντες ἀπραγμόνως τὰ τῶν
περιβόλων ὑπερέβησαν κρήδεμνα
(Nik.Chon. 317/11-13)

ὅτε ὁ Φαέδων τὴν ἐν ἄστροις οὐρανοῦ
τέμνειν ὁδὸν ἐπεβάλετο τοῦ πατρικοῦ
καὶ χρυσοκολλήτου ἐπιβάς ἄρματος
(Nik.Chon. 223/7-9)

καὶ παίζων τῶν ἐν ταῖς πέλας
συμφοραῖς (Nik.Chon. 324/2)
τὴν καπνηρὰν καὶ πυραμιδοειδῆ ἐρέαν
τῆς κεφαλῆς (Nik.Chon. 271/54)
ἔφασκε...τὰ τῆς γραίας μυκήματα
(Nik.Chon. 298/36-37)

ἐνούρουν τε τοῖ φρέασι καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν
ἐσέπειτα τὸ ποτὸν ἀνιμώμενοι
προσεφέροντο (Nik.Chon. 302/5-6)

λαλαγοῦντες δὲ πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς καὶ
ταῖς ἀσήμεσι βοαῖς διαρρηγνύμενοι
(Nik.Chon. 306/51-52)

Moreover, it is of importance to note the more substantial differences between Niketas and Eustathios. It appears that our historian, as with the case of Kinnamos, often manipulated the information derived from Eustathios. For example, Eustathios tells a story where Andronikos Komnenos, firmly established within the imperial palace, reproaches the patriarch Theodosios for not visiting the young sovereign, Alexios II often enough. Theodosios replies with a caustic jibe: 'I gave up bothering about the emperor when I discovered that you had taken up residence here.' The cunning Andronikos immediately recognises the double meaning of the phrase uttered by the 'crafty Armenian'. Niketas recounts a similar story, where the patriarch, angered by Andronikos' feigning flattery to his person and his theatrical antics, makes a deliberately vague remark concerning Andronikos' insidious ways.

Quoting from the Psalm of David (Psalm 47.9), the patriarch utters ‘as we have heard, so we have also seen.’ Once again, Andronikos does not fail to recognise the meaning of the phrase of the ‘crafty Armenian’. Niketas not only alters the words exchanged between the participants, but also the circumstances and location of the entire episode, which is placed earlier, when a delegation from the clergy was ferried from Constantinople across the straits to meet Andronikos Komnenos in Chalcedon.⁴⁶

Niketas, moreover, outright rejects Eustathios’ testimony on a number of occasions, especially when it relates to events in Constantinople. There are many discrepancies between the two accounts concerning the uprising of Manuel’s daughter, Maria the *kaisarissa* in the spring of 1181. Whereas Eustathios tells us that the fighting between Maria’s faction and the imperial party took place the Friday after Easter (10 April) and gives a rather vague account of the military engagement, Niketas places the disclosure of the conspiracy in February, the actual combat on 2 May and provides us with a detailed account of the battle.⁴⁷ More important is the discrepancy between the two accounts concerning the interference of Andronikos Komnenos in the conflict between Alexios the *protosebastos* and Maria the *kaisarissa*.

Niketas claims that Andronikos had been preparing his entry in Constantinople (April 1182) even before the conspiracy took place. He was responsible for spreading malicious rumours about the alleged sexual affair between the empress Maria-Xene and the *protosebastos* and openly requested the removal of the latter. On the contrary, Eustathios maintains that Andronikos entered the political scene only once the affair with Maria the *kaisarissa* was over.⁴⁸ The two historians differ markedly in their accounts of the proclamation of Andronikos I emperor (September 1183). Eustathios’ version is more detailed and fanciful and there is considerable variation concerning succeeding events.⁴⁹ Finally, Niketas claims that from the generals sent by Andronikos Komnenos to defend Thessaloniki, only

⁴⁶ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 38/18–40/7; Nik.Chon., pp. 252/70–253/3. See also J. Melville-Jones, *Commentary to The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 181–82, n. 34.

⁴⁷ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, pp. 22/10–26/23; Nik.Chon., pp. 230/93–241/69.

⁴⁸ For this discrepancy see discussion in C. Cupane, ‘La guerra civile della primavera 1181 nel racconto di Niceta Coniate e Eustazio di Tessalonica: narratologia historiae ancilla?’, *JÖB* 44 (1997), pp. 179–208 and the reply of Jan Louis van Dieten, ‘Eustathios von Thessaloniki und Niketas Choniates über das Geschehen im Jahre nach dem Tod Manuels I. Komnenos’, *JÖB* 49 (1999), pp. 101–12.

⁴⁹ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 50/1–33; Nik.Chon., pp. 271/57–273/91. See also J. Melville-Jones, *Commentary to The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 186, n. 41.

Theodore Choumnos dared to engage the Normans in battle, whereas Eustathios makes no mention of this.⁵⁰

It is thus becoming clear that our historian utilised other historical accounts of the period in a highly selective and critical manner. Where Niketas follows his sources, he never copies *verbatim*, but instead conducts alterations that fit well with his didactic purpose and vibrant style. Where he diverges from his sources, he often offers conflicting evidence.

2) Imperial Panegyric

On the whole it can be said that Niketas' account frequently echoes the language and motifs of rhetorical works composed at the imperial court and shows close dependence upon them.⁵¹ In particular, Niketas appears not only to have utilised these types of sources for historical information, but also to have essentially reproduced the image of the Komnenian emperors, specifically John II and Manuel I found in contemporary encomia and official bulletins. In fact, our historian diverges from the encomiastic sources only in those passages where he is critical of the Komnenian emperors, and even on such occasions the language he utilises is reminiscent of rhetorical motifs found in encomiastic literature.⁵² In turn, these similarities in language can be used to assist us in identifying Niketas' sources and demonstrating the selective manner in which he used the information derived from them. One such source was the writings of the renowned court poet of the Komnenoi, Theodore Prodromos.⁵³ A brief comparison of parallel passages between the two authors indicates their close relationship:

νοσαζόμενος τὸ σῶμα (Prod. XVI/49) καχεξίας σώματος (Nik.Chon. 33/62-63)

⁵⁰ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 72/16-28; Nik.Chon., p. 318/22-44.

⁵¹ See discussions in Maisano, 'Fonti di Niceta Coniata', pp. 393-99; Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 443ff. Concerning encomia, Magdalino has drawn attention to the fact that there was no coherent official version of events, as they were often recorded and celebrated by many writers. As a result there are many factual discrepancies arising from different first-hand sources of information. It is also clear that the surviving pieces are but a fraction of the encomiastic literature of the times. This makes it difficult to pinpoint Niketas' sources with absolute certainty. Nevertheless, on the basis of similarities in language and motifs, it is possible to trace a pattern that illustrates the selective manner in which Niketas reproduces the information derived from his sources.

⁵² Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 443, 457-58.

⁵³ Theodore Prodromos, *Theodoros Prodromos, historische Gedichte*, ed. W. Hörander, Vienna 1974.

νοσοῦμεν καχεκτούμεν καὶ κλίνειν νόσῳ σώματος καὶ σπάνει τῶν
ἐπιπίπτομεν καὶ φάρμακα ζητοῦμεν ἀναγκαίων (Nik.Chon. 33/74-75)⁵⁴
(Prod. XVI/52-53)

τῇ συστρατήγῳ σου θαρρῶν παρθένῳ καὶ τὰς νίκας ὡς συστρατηγέτιδι
καὶ συμμάχῳ, δι' ἧς ἐκ πάσης ἀμάχῳ ἐπιγραφόμενος (Nik.Chon. 19/91-
προσβολῆς σὺν νίκαις ὑποστρέφεις 92)⁵⁵
(Prod. XVI/125-26)

ἵπποι δ' ἔσαν πίσυρες... καλοὶ πίσυρες ἵπποι καλλίτριχες χιόνος
χιονόεντες (Prod. VI/83-84) λευκότεροι (Nik.Chon., 19/88-89)

τὴν ἄοριν ἐν νήσοις (Prod. XXX/48) τὸ δὲ ὕψος ὑπὲρ τὴν ἀδομένην Ἄοριν
(Nik.Chon., 78/45-46)⁵⁶

πυκνὰς τῶν οἰστῶν νιφάδας (Prod. XXX/60) ὡς νιφετὸν κατέχεον τὰ τοξεύματα
(Nik.Chon., 78/59-60)

The historian's description of the reaction of Manuel Komnenos upon hearing the news of the untimely death of his empress, Bertha of Sulzbach is consistent with the official reports publicizing the event.⁵⁷ His favourable depiction of the *megas domestikos*, John Axouch has much in common with the description of this individual found in the letters of Michael Italikos and in an encomium of Nikephoros Basilakes.⁵⁸ Again, the rhetorical language of Niketas' excessive praise of Andronikos I Komnenos and his almost certain exaggeration of the success of this emperor's program of administrative reform give the unmistakable impression that this section stems from an official propagandistic pamphlet circulating at the time.⁵⁹

Moreover, for his account of the battle of Myriokephalon (1176), Niketas appears to have relied heavily on official bulletins and newsletters, as his reporting

⁵⁴ In this instance it is interesting to note that where Prodromos uses νόσος, Niketas uses καχεξία, and where Prodromos uses καχεξία, Niketas uses νόσος.

⁵⁵ The word ἀμάχῳ used here by Niketas to describe the mother of God is used by Prodromos further on to describe God himself: ἀμαχὸν σύμμαχον τὸν σωτῆρα: Theodore Prodromos, no. XVI/214. Niketas uses the concept of the Virgin Mary as a fellow general of the Byzantine army in the context of the celebration that followed John II Komnenos' triumphant defeat of the Pechenegs (1133).

⁵⁶ Hörander notes the striking similarity in his commentary to *historische Gedichte*, p. 361. See further discussion in: A. Rhoby, 'Beobachtungen zu einigen Textstellen im Geschichtswerk des Niketas Choniates', *BZ* 95 (2002), pp. 86-87.

⁵⁷ Maisano, 'Fonti di Niceta Coniata', p. 398. See especially Basil of Ochrid's funeral oration to the empress in W. Regel (ed.), *Fontes Rerum Byzantinorum, Rhetorum saeculi XII orationes politicae*, Fasc. I-II, St. Petersburg 1892 (repr. 1982), pp. 311-30.

⁵⁸ R. Maisano, 'Memoria letteraria e memoria storica: il personaggio di Giovanni Axuch nell' opera di Niceta Coniata', *Atti della Accademia Pontaniana* XLVI (1997), pp. 169-171; Michael Italikos, *Michel Italikos, lettres et discours*, ed. P. Gautier, Archives de l'orient chrétien 14, Paris 1972, pp. 222-24, 228-230; Nikephoros Basilakes, *Niceforo Basilace oratione et epistolae*, ed. A. Garzya, Leipzig 1984, pp. 84-91.

⁵⁹ A. Kazhdan, 'Certain traits of Imperial propaganda in the Byzantine Empire from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries', *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Age, Islam, Byzance, Occident*, Paris 1983, pp. 23-24; Nik.Chon., pp. 324/5-331/11.

often follows the line taken by other contemporary accounts.⁶⁰ It is rather significant that in this instance the historian himself refers to the newsletters that Manuel sent to Constantinople after the event, where the emperor compared his fate to that of Romanos Diogenes in Mantzikert (1071), but insisted that the treaty with the Turks had been signed under the imperial banner.⁶¹ Thus it is clear that Niketas had access to the 'official' version of events. In other instances he makes reference to the letters dispatched by Manuel to Constantinople following the emperor's victorious military expedition to Hungary (1167),⁶² and for the Serbian campaign (1149-50) he even tells us that the bearer of Manuel's letter to Constantinople was the *megas domestikos*, John Axouch.⁶³

Finally, Niketas' account of Manuel's eastern campaigns of 1175 and 1179 is very similar to the encomiastic sources and it is obvious that in these instances, the historian is merely reproducing official reports of these events.⁶⁴ However, even on such occasions, it is evident that our author conducts alterations that suit his purpose and the style of the narrative. For example, like the court orator Euthymios Malakes,⁶⁵ Niketas discloses the contents of the letters exchanged between Manuel and the sultan of Ikonion, Kilij Arslan II during the campaign of 1175. Both writers make reference to Manuel's disbelief that the sultan was unaware of Manuel's march to Dorylaion.⁶⁶ They report Manuel's successful attempt to put an end to the continual Turkish attacks on the foragers of the Byzantine army, and praise the courage and perseverance of the emperor, who never left the side of his soldiers. According to both authors, Manuel was first to awake with the sound of the trumpet and the last to return to camp in the evening.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 458.

⁶¹ Nik.Chon., p. 191/26-33.

⁶² Nik.Chon., p. 157/50-52.

⁶³ Nik.Chon., p. 90/2-4.

⁶⁴ Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 457-58.

⁶⁵ Euthymios Malakes, *Εὐθυμίου τοῦ Μαλάκη μητροπολίτου νέων Πατρῶν (᾽Υπάτης) τὰ σωζόμενα*, ed. K. G. Bones, 2 vols, Athens 1937, 1949.

⁶⁶ Malakes, II, 28/23-25: διατωθάζει τοῦ βαρβάρου τὸ δοκοῦν... ὅπως ἀγνοεῖ καὶ θαυμάζει τὸν μέχρι Δορυλαίου δρόμον τοῦ βασιλέως; Nik.Chon., 176/53-55: διεξήκει ἐν μέρει δὴ οὐ τοῦ τυχόντος ἐτίθετο θαύματος, ὅπως τὸν μέχρι Δορυλαίου δρόμον ἐκείνου ἡγνόησε.

⁶⁷ Malakes, II, p. 30/30-1: τοὺς πολεμοῦντας ἐδίωκες προηγοῦ τῶν τὰ τροφὰς συγκομιζόντων βαρβαρικῆς ἐνέδρας ῥύομενος. περιέθει κύκλῳ πᾶσαν τὴν στρατιάν παννύχιος, πανημέριος· νυκτός μὲν αὐρυπνῶν καὶ φυλακὰς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ποιμνίου φυλάττων. 32/13-15: ὄρθος ἦν βαθὺς καὶ περιήκει μὲν ἡ σάλπιγξ, ἡγγέλετο δ' ὁ βασιλεὺς ἱππαζόμενος. ὁ ἥλιος ἔδυ καὶ ἐπὶ κνέφας ἔδυ καὶ προέκοπτε νύξ καὶ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ὁ βασιλεὺς οὐδαμοῦ; Nik.Chon., p. 176/65-70: ὁ βασιλεὺς δὲ τὸ δεινὸν τοῦτο ῥαόνως ἰάσατο· τακτὸν γὰρ ὀρίσας καιρὸν τοῖς ἐπὶ τὴν συλλογὴν ἐξιούσι

Yet there is a discrepancy between the two accounts. Both writers report the episode where Manuel Komnenos, on being informed of a Turkish attack on the foragers of the Byzantine army, immediately throws away the peach that he is eating and rides out to the assistance of his troops.⁶⁸ But while Malakes connects this episode to the rebuilding of the fortress of Soublaion, Niketas connects it with the rebuilding of Dorylaion, the major military post that lay on a strategic road junction controlling the passage from Constantinople to the interior of Asia Minor.⁶⁹ In order to account for Niketas' divergence from his source, it is significant to note that the historian's narration of Manuel Komnenos' expedition against the Turks in 1175 is in the first place highly condensed and in the second, only incorporated so as to recount a series of heroic deeds performed by the emperor at that time. Thus perhaps for the sake of convenience, Niketas transfers the episode from Soublaion to Dorylaion, where his own account is concentrated.

A further example can be used to strengthen the above point. The one writer, who undoubtedly exerted great influence over our historian, was his brother Michael Choniates. It has been demonstrated that Niketas made extensive use of Michael's works and more specifically his panegyric speech to Isaakios II Angelos.⁷⁰ However, the particular way in which Niketas used Michael's works has not received attention. Although the similarities between Niketas' historical account and Michael's panegyric are striking, it is nevertheless obvious that our historian modifies certain passages for stylistic effect:

ὥς κύων ἐλίμωττε καὶ ἀμφεκύκλου
τὴν πόλιν (Mich.Chon., I, 221/9-10)

ὥς ἔαρ μετὰ χειμῶνα καὶ μετὰ
κλύδωνα γαλήνην (Mich.Chon. I,
210/10-12)

σήμερον θεῖος Μωσῆς τῆς δουλείας
ἀπαλλάξας δημαγωγεῖ...νῦν

λιμώττων δὲ ὥς κύων... περιεκύκλου τὴν
πόλιν (Nik.Chon., 283/23-24)

ὥς ἐκ χειμῶνος εἰς ἔαρ μετάβασιν ἢ
γαλήνην ἀπὸ ζάλης (Nik.Chon., 356/29-
30)

τὸν ἐλευθερωτὴν Μωσῆν καὶ τὸν
ἐπανάγοντα Ζοροβάβελ τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν

τῶν ἀναγκαίων αὐτὸς προσημαίνων τῇ σάλπιγγι πρῶτος τοῦ χάρακος ἀπανίστατο καὶ ἡγεῖτο τῆς ὁδοῦ. οὐκοῦν οὐδὲ πρὸς βραχὺ τῶν τὰ ἐπιτήδεια διφώντων μεθιστάμενος ἐνίοτε περὶ βουλυτὸν ἢ καὶ βαθεῖαν ἐσπέραν ἐπανέλυσεν εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον. (Niketas here combines two episodes into one).

⁶⁸ Malakes, II, p. 44/16-19.

⁶⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 177/73-77. See also the analysis of Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 457-58.

⁷⁰ Michael Choniates, I, pp. 208-58 and Lampros' notes, II, pp. 480-99; G. Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates. Metropolit von Athen (ca. 1138- ca. 1222)*, Rome 1934, p. 229; van Dieten, *Biographie*, pp. 35-36; F. Kolovou, *Μιχαὴλ Χωνιάτης. Συμβολὴ στη μελέτη του βίου καὶ του ἔργου του. Το Corpus των ἐπιστολῶν*, Athens 1999, p. 172ff.; Rhoby, 'Beobachtungen', pp. 87-90.

Ζοροβάβελ ἀνοικοδομεῖ τὰ τείχη τῆς
νέας Σιών (Mich.Chon., I, 241/23,
242/2)

ὅτε δὲ τινα ὀλοκαυτώσειεν ὁσμήν
εὐωδίας ὡσφραίνετο (Mich.Chon., I,
232/2-3)

ὑπεβλέπετο ἔχων παρ' ἑαυτῷ τὸν
καθ' ἡμᾶς δημαγωγὸν Μωσῆν, οὕτω
παραδόξως σεσωσμένον εἰς τὴν
ἐκείνου καθαίρεσιν (Mich.Chon., I,
224/2-4)

Σιών (Nik.Chon., 356/32-34)

οὐκ εὐωδίας ὁσμή, ἣν ὁσφραίνεται
Κύριος, ἀλλ' Ἐριννύων χορὸς
(Nik.Chon., 311/91-92)

τὸν ἑαυτοῦ φονέα καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς
παραλύσοντα τρέφων κατὰ θεῖον καὶ
περιθάλπων εἰς τὸν τῇ προνοίᾳ
δοκοῦντα καιρόν (Nik.Chon., 286/11-13)

Niketas, however, contradicts Michael's testimony on numerous occasions. The most significant of these concerns the stance of Isaakios Angelos during the siege of the rebellious city of Nicaea by the then emperor Andronikos I Komnenos in 1183. While Michael tells us that Isaakios distinguished himself throughout the siege operations; according to Niketas, the cowardly Isaakios stood aloof from the fighting.⁷¹ A more direct contradiction occurs where Michael likens the harsh words with which Isaakios addressed Andronikos from within the walls of Nicaea to 'arrows', while Niketas speaks of Andronikos praising Isaakios after the capitulation of the city for not making use of his words as arrows!⁷² Michael further claims that Isaakios forced Andronikos to be merciful to the residents of the captured city, whereas Niketas testifies that Andronikos fell upon the citizens of Nicaea like a ravenous lion.⁷³ Finally, where Michael tells us that Isaakios offered protection to the remaining relatives and followers of Andronikos, Niketas claims that the sons of Andronikos were immediately seized and blinded.⁷⁴

The question concerning which version of events is more accurate is difficult to answer. The fact that Michael was delivering his speech in the presence of Isaakios Angelos at the imperial court makes his testimony immediately suspect. Yet Niketas' version is at best dubious as it is obvious that he is not drawing on different accounts so as to offer conflicting evidence, but merely manipulating Michael's testimony so as to contradict him. He did this in order to paint a black picture of Isaakios Angelos even before the latter's accession to the throne in 1185. This picture corresponds to

⁷¹ Michael Choniates, I, pp. 219/22-224/1; Nik.Chon., p. 284/48-50.

⁷² Michael Choniates, I, p. 221/6-7; Nik.Chon., p. 286/6-7.

⁷³ Michael Choniates, I, p. 221/16-19; Nik.Chon., pp. 288/51-289/77.

⁷⁴ Michael Choniates, I, p. 238/9-11; Nik.Chon., p. 356/37-45.

Niketas' portrayal of the weak, indolent and gullible emperor. Therefore, it is not so much that our historian had access to other sources of information unknown to us, but rather that he deliberately manipulated the evidence so as to fit his purpose.

3) Personal Correspondence

Finally, it is quite evident that Niketas not only acquired information from Michael via the latter's *encomia*, but also through the letters exchanged between the two brothers.⁷⁵ It is rather unfortunate that only one such letter survives to this day, but we do know that Michael corresponded with Niketas right up until the time of the historian's death.⁷⁶ Niketas' detailed information concerning the activities of Leo Sgouros, the Greek leader of resistance against the Latins in Greece after 1204, most likely came from the information that Michael had provided him in a letter, given that Michael himself was one of the protagonists of the events described.⁷⁷ It could very well be that Niketas received the bulk of his information concerning events that transpired in central Greece and in the Peloponnese after 1204 from Michael, who included in his letters to Niketas whatever news he happened to come across in his place of exile on the island of Kea. This suggestion is reinforced by the observation that Niketas' reporting in these instances is more in the form of news announcements rather than a detailed narration or even a summary of events, while on the contrary he seems to have been quite well informed of events in Thrace.⁷⁸

For example, Niketas merely states that Leo Sgouros met Alexios III Angelos at Larissa and was there married to the emperor's daughter.⁷⁹ Later he reports that Alexios III took Alexios V Doukas captive and had him blinded.⁸⁰ The Latin advance through mainland Greece and the Peloponnese is dealt with in two pages (609-10) and Niketas fails to mention the decisive encounter that took place between the

⁷⁵ For linguistic similarities see Rhoby, 'Beobachtungen', pp. 87-90.

⁷⁶ Michael Choniates, II, p.325/13-15: Where the metropolitan, addressing his nephew Michael, expresses great anxiety because Niketas stopped writing to him. This letter, written during Michael's exile on Kea, has been dated to 1216 by Lampros. It does not, of course, prove that Niketas was deceased because Michael had not recently received a letter from him, but it does show that the two brothers were still in contact at such a late date.

⁷⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 605/65-608/51, 611/25-35.

⁷⁸ This is to be expected since Niketas was resident in Selymbria from the fall of Constantinople until about June 1206.

⁷⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 608/47-51. For this incident see A. Savvides, 'Ο Λέων Σγουρός στη Λάρισα το 1204 μ.Χ.', *Πρακτικά Συνεδρίου Α' Λαρισαϊκών Σπουδών*, Larisa 1992, pp. 55-72.

⁸⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 608/56-60.

Greeks and Latins on the battlefield of Kountoura in 1205, unless we take his enigmatic reference to a certain conflict between the armies of the jackdaws from the north and the ravens from the south, which he dates before the Cuman incursion in 1206, to mean the crucial battle on the Peloponnese.⁸¹ Later on, he merely lists the leaders of the Greek resistance⁸² and mentions in passing that Alexios III met with the crusader leader, Boniface of Montferrat, was captured and sent into exile at Halmyros.⁸³ The death of Leo Sgouros is reported in a rather ambiguous manner and so is the unidentifiable battle between the Greeks and the Latins that took place somewhere in Epiros in ca. 1207/8. It is evident that this type of reporting, which does not correspond with Niketas' usual style, was due to the inadequate nature and poor quality of information available to him after 1204.

Overall, however, it is evident that Niketas treated his written sources in a distinctly careful and selective manner. The historian certainly acquired a wealth of information from his sources, but nowhere, as far as we can tell, does he copy a source *verbatim*. Where he follows a source very closely, he chooses different forms of the same word or a different grammatical structure. He often modifies passages for the purposes of literary refinement and manipulates the evidence for his own purposes. Finally, where he disagrees, he often offers a different version that is in direct confrontation with his source. Niketas' insistence on rhetorical language and his emphasis on descriptive rather than factual narration may partially explain his great reliance on encomiastic literature and the comparatively little use he seems to have made of imperial archives, as evidenced by his ignorance and ambiguous reporting of certain diplomatic negotiations and the vagueness, which characterises his references to imperial novels or new laws.⁸⁴ However, it can hardly be maintained

⁸¹ Nik.Chon., p. 637/20-24. For this battle see M. Kordoses, 'Η κατάκτηση της Νότιας Ελλάδας από τους Φράγκους', *Ιστοριογεωγραφικά* 1 (1986), pp. 100-6 and *Λεξικόν της Βυζαντινής Πελοποννήσου*, ed. N. Nikoloudis, Athens 1998, pp. 205-06.

⁸² Nik.Chon, p. 638/42-51.

⁸³ Nik.Chon., p. 612/41-44.

⁸⁴ Chalandon, *Les Comnène*, II, p. XXVI. To take a few examples out of many, Niketas does not mention John II's rupture with Venice, nor the war that followed. He is equally silent about John's relations with the papacy and the German empire. In his account of the Second Crusade, he does not refer to the negotiations between Manuel and Conrad and there are many errors and much chronological confusion in his reporting of Manuel's Italian wars. The negotiations between Manuel and Frederick Barbarossa are completely ignored. Similarly, Isaakios' negotiations with Frederick Barbarossa are ambiguously reported and his treaty with Saladin is only mentioned in passing. Alexios III's treaty with the Turks in 1200 is again ambiguously reported and so is the emperor's campaign in

that a person of Niketas' stature did not have documents from the imperial archives at his disposal.⁸⁵ It is more likely that Niketas simply chose to ignore such information, given that he is much more interested in description and commentary of events and personalities rather than factual reporting.⁸⁶ We shall return to this later.

One last issue that ought to be raised here is whether Niketas had access to these types of sources in Nicaea, where he conducted his work of revision after 1204. Since the historian established some kind of connection with the imperial court, it would appear that he may have had access to at least some written sources housed at court or circulated among the elite at the Byzantine court in exile. After all, Niketas wrote the *Panoplia Dogmatike* whilst in exile, and this is certainly a work almost entirely composed from written sources.⁸⁷ Yet he does not appear to have made use of these types of sources in his work of revision for the *Historia*. This is because when Niketas alters or adds passages in the a-text, he does not do so because he has received new information.

4) Oral Communications

Niketas, no doubt, received a considerable amount of information from oral communications derived from his various informants and important friends or acquaintances at the imperial court. He, however, only admits to the information he received from contemporaries who knew John II Komnenos personally and who escorted him on his military campaigns.⁸⁸ In this instance, we can safely assume that our author gathered information from personal interviews he conducted with such individuals. If so, then we can also presume that he had the opportunity to interview individuals who accompanied Manuel I, Isaakios II, and Alexios III on their respective military campaigns. Indeed, on occasion it is even possible to detect such information in the text. For example, Niketas tells us that during John Komnenos' expedition against the Turks (1139), the emperor dealt with his fatigued,

1201-02 against the rebels Drobomir Chrysos and Manuel Kamytzes. Moreover, Alexios' relations with the papacy are again completely ignored.

⁸⁵ Kazhdan, Introduction to *Narrazione cronologica*, I, p. XV.

⁸⁶ For example, Niketas is able to quote portions of the correspondence exchanged between Isaakios II and the King of Sicily, William II and the generals of the Norman army that had captured Thessaloniki in 1185 (363/24-364/39, 365/55-64). He also quotes from the letters exchanged between Isaakios II and Frederick Barbarossa (410/52-54) and the preamble to a decree of Andronikos I (336/29-46).

⁸⁷ L. Petit, 'Acominatos Nicétas', *DTC*, 1.1, col. 316ff.

⁸⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 4/76-81.

undernourished and ailing troops in a severe manner. He ignored their complaints and refused to allow them even a brief respite from military activities.⁸⁹ Such information that reflects badly on the emperor could hardly have derived from Kinnamos or court encomia.

Similarly, Niketas' richly detailed and highly circumstantial account of Alexios III's expedition against the rebel Drobomir Chrysos in 1197, which includes a speech attributed to the *parakoimomenos* George Oinaïotes and graphic details of the quarrel that arose among the emperor's chief advisors with regard to the stratagem that should be followed in the campaign, suggests that the historian received his information from an eyewitness, who not only escorted Alexios on the expedition but was present at the councils that decided military stratagem.⁹⁰ This episode then could very well indicate that Niketas' sources were high-ranking military officials and not the rank-and-file soldiery. This can be confirmed by a further incident. On this occasion it is even possible to trace the identity of Niketas' source. Although the historian certainly used written sources for his reporting of the battle of Myriokephalon, the account is often so circumstantial as to suggest that Niketas also received information from eyewitnesses and in particular from the *megas doux*, Andronikos Kontostephanos.⁹¹ The following episode narrated by Niketas could hardly have come from an official bulletin or newsletter.

When darkness had descended upon the battlefield of Myriokephalon, 'the emperor himself suffered from his own ignoble thoughts. When he gave birth to them he shared them with those around him. His plan of secret flight and the surrender of so many souls to slavery and death shocked his listeners *and especially Kontostephanos*.'⁹² In another episode, Kontostephanos had arrayed his troops for battle (Hungarian expedition of 1167), when suddenly a messenger arrived from the emperor instructing the general to put off the military engagement for another day. Kontostephanos concealed the letter in his bosom and disobeyed the emperor's

⁸⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 33/68-83.

⁹⁰ Nik.Chon., pp. 502/10-507/51-52.

⁹¹ Maisano, 'Fonti di Niceta Coniata', pp. 402-403.

⁹² Nik.Chon., p. 187/93-1: αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κρατῶν ἀγενεστάτας βουλὰς ᾤδινεν. ὡς δὲ ταύτας ἀποτεκῶν εἰς ἀκοήν τῶν σὺν ἐκείνῳ ἐξέφερε καὶ ἦν τὸ ὑφηγούμενον λαθραία φυγὴ καὶ τῶν τοσοῦτων ψυχῶν εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν καὶ θάνατον ἔκδοσις, ἐκπλήτει τοὺς ἀκρωμένους καὶ πλέον τὸν Κοντοστέφανον.

command.⁹³ It is clear that only Kontostephanos himself could have revealed such confidential information to Niketas.⁹⁴

Similarly, it appears that the final campaign of Isaakios II Angelos against the Vlacho-Bulgarians in 1195 was described to Niketas by a source close to the emperor. During the campaign, Isaakios stopped at Rhaidestos to celebrate Easter. At that place he consulted a reputed seer named Basilakios. Niketas describes this incident in the following terms: ‘when he [Basilakios] appeared before the emperor, he neither heeded him who was invested with such great power, nor did he reply to his greeting (which was hail, O Father Basilakios) nor did he in return silently nod his head, but instead [...] he insulted those present *and in particular Constantine Mesopotamites*.’⁹⁵ The circumstantial account of the whole incident suggests that Niketas received his information from an oral communication. Moreover, the emphasis on Mesopotamites, at that time a colleague of Niketas at the imperial court and later an addressee of several of the historian’s letters could indicate, as in the case of Kontostephanos and Myriocephalon, that it was this individual who described the episode to Niketas.

However, it appears that Niketas made greater use of oral communications in relating various incidents and happenings at the imperial court. There is no doubt that the historian received privileged and private information from powerful friends at court and he is meticulous in citing the intrigues of court rivals and the undisclosed private affairs of emperors and high-ranking government officials. His detailed reporting of the machinations of John Kamateros against his colleague, Theodore Styppeiotes certainly derives from a private oral communication. The fanciful scene where Kamateros allegedly places the emperor behind a curtain and lures his rival to

⁹³ Nik.Chon., p.154/43-49.

⁹⁴ See Kazhdan, Introduction to *Narrazione cronologica*, I, pp. XLVIII. The existence of a special relationship between Niketas and Kontostephanos is suggested by the fact that the historian all but dedicates book V of the reign of Manuel Komnenos to this individual; his triumphant victory over the Hungarians in 1167, the expedition against Egypt in 1169 and the pursuit of the Venetian fleet in 1171. Niketas even places two elaborately-worked heroic speeches in the mouth of Kontostephanos, while it is noteworthy that the emperor himself is not given a full-length speech. The relationship between Niketas and Kontostephanos could have been reinforced by the fact that the Kontostephanoi owned lands near Niketas’ ancestral home in Chonai.

⁹⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 449/41-46. The information on Mesopotamites is only available in ms. DF of the b version. Apparently Niketas did not wish to divulge his source in the a-text, considering the highly negative portrait he paints of this individual in the final version: τότε γοῦν ἐπιστάντι τῷ αὐτοκράτορι οὔτε προσέσχευ ὅλως ὡς περιβεβλιμένῳ τοσαύτην καὶ τοιαύτην ἰσχύν, οὔτε πρὸς τὴν αὐτοῦ προσηγορίαν (ἡ δὲ ἦν χαίροις, ὦ πάτερ Βασιλάκιε) τὴν ἀπόκρισιν ἔθετο ἢ γοῦν ἀντησπάσατο σιωπῇ κατανεύσας τῇ κεφαλῇ, ἀλλ’...ἐκακολόγει τοὺς προσιόντας (add. DF καὶ μάλιστα τὸν Μεσοποταμίτην Κωνσταντῖνον).

that place so as to induce him to confess to his crimes and thereby prove his guilt to Manuel Komnenos, indicates this to be true.⁹⁶ In the same way, Niketas claims that the demonic powers of Michael Sikidites, an undersecretary to Manuel Komnenos, entertained his companions at court and even cites a specific incident where Sikidites, looking down at the sea from the imperial palace, allegedly conjured up a serpent to terrify a boatman, thus causing the poor wretch to smash his entire cargo.⁹⁷ Again, the information that Alexios III commanded his bodyguard Bestralites to murder Euphrosyne's lover and Niketas' vivid description of the last dinner shared between the imperial couple stems from similar sources within the palace.⁹⁸

The information that Andronikos I Komnenos ordered the eunuch Pterygonites to carry out the murder of Maria the *kaisarissa* could only have come from a source within the imperial palace,⁹⁹ and Niketas' knowledge of the names of the murderers of the young Alexios II as well as his detailed and circumstantial reporting of the scene of the murder, no doubt, derived from a similar source. Again it is, on occasion, possible to trace Niketas' sources within the imperial palace. In a rare case of outspokenness, the historian himself tells us that the caesar, John Kantakouzenos, who was married to Eirene Angelina, sister of the emperors Isaakios II and Alexios III had entrusted him (πιστοῦταί μοι τὸν λόγον) with the following information. A certain eunuch named Tzitas was once discovered discussing the calamities that had befallen the empire with the young sovereign Alexios II Komnenos. Kantakouzenos, who was obviously a supporter of Andronikos I, felt it his duty to strike the man down. Yet almost immediately he himself was arrested and blinded for having sent a greeting through a jailer to the prisoner Constantine Angelos, his wife's brother.¹⁰⁰ This episode reveals that Niketas was not only able to receive privileged information from his colleagues at court, but that he had gained the confidence of a member of the imperial family.

The historian appears to have made widespread use of popular accounts throughout his narrative. Primary example was the rumour concerning the appearance of women on the Second Crusade and in particular one who stood out from the rest

⁹⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 112/50-62.

⁹⁷ Nik.Chon., pp. 148/1-149/22.

⁹⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 488/95-6, 489/41-46.

⁹⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 259/37-260/44.

¹⁰⁰ Nik.Chon., pp. 258/17-259/23.

and was called Goldfoot because she wore a garment of embroidered gold.¹⁰¹ Niketas' sources for the alleged 'golden years' of the reign of Manuel Komnenos were the reports of 'men advanced in years'.¹⁰² The historian retold the story he heard (λόγος διαρρέων καὶ ἐς ἡμᾶς) concerning an alleged conversation that took place between Manuel and Andronikos Komnenos at the Hippodrome. On that occasion, Andronikos pointed out to his cousin two columns that stood at the entrance gate and predicted that one day an emperor of the Romans would be suspended from there and ill-treated by the populace. He did not then know, remarks Niketas that he himself was to be that emperor.¹⁰³

Niketas' romantic and fantastical account of Andronikos' escape from prison (1158), which includes a passionate sexual encounter between Andronikos and his wife in the prison cell that resulted in the birth of a son, almost certainly derives from popular stories told about the emperor.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the tale that the reputed astrologer and sorcerer Skleros Seth had once sent a peach to a virgin who was subsequently driven mad with passion and deflowered by him was certainly of popular origin,¹⁰⁵ and so was the one concerning an ill-starred woman, whose husband, upon seeing that his wife was about to be violated by a foreign soldier, immediately slew her.¹⁰⁶ Niketas also recorded the popular taunts heard in the streets of Constantinople and aimed at the promiscuous Euphrosyne Kamatere, 'πολιτικὴ τὸ δίκαιον',¹⁰⁷ Again, Niketas is as equally enthusiastic about citing various prophecies, dreams, omens and portents. The historian's own godfather, Niketas, the bishop of Chonai had predicted that Manuel's older brother, Isaakios would submit to Manuel as emperor, that Manuel would outlive his grandfather, Alexios I, but that at the end of his life he would go mad. 'This prophecy', says the historian, 'was known to me, the author Niketas and many others'.¹⁰⁸ He also cites the well-known oracular utterance *aima*, which supposedly designated the initials of the Komnenian emperors¹⁰⁹ and further maintains that the blinding and deposition of Isaakios II was foretold

¹⁰¹ Chalandon, *Les Comnène*, II, p. XXV; Nik.Chon., pp. 60/48-55, 66/26-33.

¹⁰² Nik.Chon., p. 59/16: ὡς γὰρ ἀπήγγελον ἡμῖν οἱ τὴν ἡλικίαν προήκοντες.

¹⁰³ Nik.Chon., p. 352/78-83.

¹⁰⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 107/16-32

¹⁰⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 148/86-95.

¹⁰⁶ Nik.Chon., pp. 134/5-136/15.

¹⁰⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 520/56-66. For possible interpretations of the phrase see Christophilopoulou, *Βυζαντινὴ Ἱστορία*, pp. 277-78.

¹⁰⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 219/94-95: ἦν οὖν ἡ πρόρρησις αὕτη καὶ ἐμοὶ τῷ συγγραφεῖ Νικήτᾳ σὺν ἄλλοις πλείστοις γνώριμος.

¹⁰⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 169/93-94, 292/59-61, 426/83-86.

by a certain holy man, Basilakios, and that the slaying of the rebel, Asan was predicted by a priest who had been incarcerated by the Vlacho-Bulgarians.¹¹⁰

5) Personal Experiences

Niketas' own recollections occupy a significant portion of the narrative. In 1187, the historian, in the capacity of under secretary, accompanied Isaakios II on his campaign against the Vlacho-Bulgarian rebels and their Cuman allies in the region of Beroe. Near Lardea, the Byzantine army barely escaped a disastrous defeat, commemorated by Niketas as a victory in an official communication to the patriarch and the Holy Synod.¹¹¹ Niketas also personally witnessed the passage of the Third Crusade through Thrace, at which time he was the governor of Philippopolis. In that capacity, he received a series of contradictory orders from Isaakios II Angelos, first to strengthen and fortify the walls of Philippopolis, and later to demolish them so that they would not provide the crusaders with a place of refuge.¹¹² When Frederick Barbarossa entered Philippopolis on 25-26 August 1189, he found the city abandoned.¹¹³ Meanwhile Isaakios had sent an army under the command of the *protostrator* Manuel Kamytzes to oppose the Germans.

At the fortress of Prousinos, in the hills surrounding Philippopolis, the chief battle between the Byzantine army and the German crusaders was waged. Niketas testifies to his own presence in that engagement, where the Byzantines suffered utter defeat.¹¹⁴ Later he tells us that the Byzantine army fled to safety in the outskirts of Ἀχρίδων (in the Rhodope region of Thrace) and admits that they plundered their own province in order to secure provisions.¹¹⁵ Upon his return to Constantinople, Niketas held an audience with the emperor. Although he refuses to divulge the contents of the conversation that took place between himself and Isaakios, he does tell us that he succeeded in persuading the emperor to release the German envoys incarcerated in

¹¹⁰ Nik.Chon., pp. 449/41-54, 468/24[469/36].

¹¹¹ Nik.Chon., pp. 396/78-398/41-42; *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 6-12.

¹¹² Nik.Chon., p. 402/49-55.

¹¹³ Nik.Chon., p. 403/71-72.

¹¹⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 409/22-35. Apparently Niketas was ordered to abandon Philippopolis and then add his former garrison to Kamytzes' field army so as to strengthen the Byzantine forces.

¹¹⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 409/36-40.

Constantinople. We can hypothesise, that Niketas, who witnessed the might of the German army up close, was arguing for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.¹¹⁶

When the illegitimate son of Manuel I, the *sebastokrator* Alexios, was arrested at Drama on the charge of conspiring against Isaakios, Niketas was assigned to supervise his tonsure as a monk in a monastery on Mount Papykios.¹¹⁷ The next mention of Niketas in the narrative occurs much later, on 25 January 1204, when the people, the senate and the clergy had congregated in Aghia Sophia to deliberate on a successor to Alexios IV.¹¹⁸ But it is highly unlikely that Niketas was not an eyewitness to several episodes he describes in the discussion of the reign of Alexios III Angelos. For example, his presence at the festivities held at the palace of Blachernai in honour of marriages of Alexios' two daughters, can be indicated by his animated description of the chariot races and gymnastic contests held in the theatre as well as the information that only the emperor's relatives and trusted advisors, a group in which Niketas along with his brothers-in-law were included, were allowed to take part in the festivities.¹¹⁹

The capture and subsequent sack of Constantinople in April 1204 and especially Niketas' tragic experience, receive detailed treatment. On this occasion, it is understandably Niketas' own story that takes centre stage. The suffering he and his family endured during those dark days is narrated more in the form of personal reminiscences rather than a historical account. The burning of Niketas' house, his dramatic escape with the help of a Venetian friend and the exodus of the refugees from the city, which includes Niketas' heroic rescue of a young female seized by the crusaders, invest the narrative with a force and realism of personal experience.¹²⁰ The reader can almost walk side by side with Niketas on that stormy and wintry day (17 April, 1204) when he carried two of his children who could not yet walk on his shoulders and a male infant in his hands, while he attempted to conceal his pregnant wife in the procession. He can also sense the agony and despair of the narrator, who upon exiting the city, fell to the ground and began to weep.¹²¹ The testimony that Niketas offers concerning the plight of the refugees in Nicaea is of inestimable value. His description of the overcrowded churches and the building of wooden shacks

¹¹⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 410/55-57.

¹¹⁷ Nik.Chon., pp. 426/1-427/33.

¹¹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 562/40-47.

¹¹⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 508/83-509/17.

¹²⁰ Nik.Chon., pp. 586/79-593/60.

¹²¹ Nik.Chon., pp. 589/38-592/49.

alongside Lake Askania, as well the derision and maltreatment that the refugees endured from the local population, testifies to the chaos that characterised life in the Byzantine territories shortly after 1204.¹²²

6) Visual Evidence

As a writer, Niketas possesses an extraordinary gift for pictorial description. He frequently utilises visual evidence to depict certain scenes he personally witnessed and several persons he had met. The historian testified to the horrific sight of the piles of bones of all those who fell in the battle between the Turks and the German crusaders on the Meander (1148).¹²³ He also testified that the not yet fully decomposed corpse of Andronikos I Komnenos, was displayed in open view in the district near the monastery of Ephoros close to the Zeuxippon Baths.¹²⁴ The historian provides us with a physical description of Isaakios II: he was of average height, robust in body, had a reddish complexion and red hair.¹²⁵ Manuel Komnenos was tall and handsome, ‘but ever so slightly stooped’. Andronikos was of heroic stature and had a youthful face despite his snowy white beard.¹²⁶ Kilij Arslan II was not at all well proportioned and had a slight limp, hence the nickname later contrived of him by Andronikos Komnenos, ‘Koutz-Arslan’.¹²⁷ The first Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, Thomas Morosini, whom Niketas probably saw during his six-month sojourn in Constantinople after 1204, was middle aged and overweight, his face and chest were shaven, he wore an embroidered garment that fit tightly around the body but was loose at the chest and wrists. He wore a ring on his hand and leather coverings were sometimes fitted to his fingers.¹²⁸

Niketas, moreover, provides us with several descriptions of imperial portraits, which are particularly significant, since they have not survived to our days. For example, we are informed that in cases of *damnatio memoriae*, the images of the individual who had fallen from grace were despoiled or even effaced completely. He

¹²² Nik.Chon., p. 645/66-70.

¹²³ Nik.Chon., p. 71/64-67.

¹²⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 352/93-2.

¹²⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 452/16-19.

¹²⁶ Nik.Chon., pp. 51/75-81, 351/56-59. See also C. Head, ‘Physical Descriptions of Emperors in Byzantine Historical Writing’, *Byz* 50 (1980), pp. 226-40.

¹²⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 122/46-51.

¹²⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 623/74-79, 647/7-15.

tells us that Andronikos Komnenos ordered that the image of Maria-Xene in paintings be disfigured so that the beautiful empress would look like a shrivelled-up old woman. Later, he replaced her portraits with portraits of himself as emperor accompanied by his child bride, or figures in relief.¹²⁹ When Andronikos himself was ousted from the throne, his image in the city was obliterated and his representation on walls and boards completely destroyed.¹³⁰

Moreover, if we judge by the testimony of Niketas, Andronikos seems to have had a fairly ambitious programme of cultural patronage, with emphasis on self-portraiture. Near the church of the Forty Martyrs, he erected several buildings decorated with paintings and mosaics, which Niketas describes in detail: there were heroic scenes of the emperor in war, glorious chariot races, as well as depictions of rustic life, of tent dwellers and of feasting after the chase, where Andronikos could be seen cutting up deer meat and roasting it over the fire.¹³¹ Niketas further tells us that Andronikos put up a fresco in the gates of the church of the Forty Martyrs, which portrayed the figure of a man dressed like a peasant and holding a sickle that curved round the bust of a handsome young man. Niketas identified the figures as those of Andronikos and Alexios II and believed that it was Andronikos' evil intention to demonstrate to everyone that he had murdered the young Alexios.¹³²

Finally, Niketas' testimony concerning the catastrophic fires of the Fourth Crusade in 1203-1204, the three-day sack of Constantinople beginning on 13 April 1204 and the subsequent destruction of the antique statues by the crusaders is invaluable, as he was an eyewitness and the only contemporary writer to record these events in detail.¹³³ The first fire (16 July 1203) set by the retreating crusaders near the

¹²⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 332/37-333/44.

¹³⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 352/86-90; See also P. Magdalino & R. Nelson, 'The emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century', *BF* 8 (1982), pp. 151-52.

¹³¹ Nik.Chon., p. 333/45-60.

¹³² Nik.Chon., p.332/22-34. This could hardly have been Andronikos' intention. For modern interpretations see P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Le portrait d'Andronic Ier Comnène et les *Oracula Leonis Sapientis*', *BF* 12 (1987), pp. 103-23; A. Eastmond, 'An intentional error? Imperial Art and "Mis-" Interpretation under Andronikos I Komnenos', *Art Bulletin* 76 (1994), pp. 502-10. For portraits of Isaakios II and Alexios III, which are not mentioned by Niketas: see Magdalino & Nelson, 'The emperor in Byzantine Art', pp. 152-62, 177-81.

¹³³ The Latin sources record the fires but are almost universally silent concerning the brutal pillage of the city. For modern works see: T. F. Madden, 'The Fires of the Fourth Crusade in Constantinople, 1203-1204: A Damage Assessment', *BZ* 84-85 (1991-92), pp. 72-89; A. Cutler, 'The *De Signis* of Nicetas Choniates: A Reappraisal', *American Journal of Archaeology* 72 (1968), pp. 113-118; E. Mathiopoulou-Tournaritou, 'Klassisches und klassizistisches im Statuenfragment von Niketas Choniates', *BZ* 73 (1980), pp. 25-40. On the pillage and devastation of Constantinople: D. Queller &

Petron Gate on the Golden Horn, reduced to ashes about 125 acres of land and left as many as twenty-thousand residents of Constantinople bereft of homes.¹³⁴ The second fire (19-21 August 1203) was the most destructive. This time the Latins set Constantinople ablaze, destroying the most opulent and densely populated regions of the city, stretching from the Mitaton Mosque on the shores of the Golden Horn to the port of Sophia on the Sea of Marmara. The inferno levelled all the buildings lying in the direction of the Arch of the Milion and adjoining the gallery of the Makron in the patriarchal complex, the Porticoes of the Domninos, the two covered streets originating at the Milion, the Forum of Constantine, an entire section of the Hippodrome, as well as a great number of ancient churches and splendid palaces.¹³⁵ The third fire ignited by the Latins (12-13 April 1204), enflamed the area from the Monastery of Evergetes down the shore of the Golden Horn to the vicinity of the Drungarios Gate.¹³⁶ So great was the destruction that when Niketas escaped five days after the fall, he described Constantinople as 'a plain of desolation.'¹³⁷

'For three days, the customary and accepted period of time for the sack of a conquered city, the victorious Latins feasted on the bloated corpse of New Rome', wrote two modern historians of the Fourth Crusade.¹³⁸ Niketas preserves for posterity the theft of ecclesiastical treasures, the despoiling of churches and palaces, the rape and murder of civilians and the destruction of many priceless artefacts of antiquity.¹³⁹ Disgusted with the vandalism of the conquerors, the author describes the magnificent artworks that future generations would never behold. Wondrous works of art, such as the colossal bronze Hera along with Paris Alexander, standing with Aphrodite and handing her the golden apple of Discord, were cast into the smelting furnace and minted into coins.¹⁴⁰ Lysippus' bronze masterpiece depicting Hercules resting was also tossed into the melting pot,¹⁴¹ as were the hundreds of bronze statues that

T. Madden, *The Fourth Crusade. The Conquest of Constantinople, 1201-1204*, Philadelphia 1997², p. 193ff.

¹³⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 545/45-50; Madden, 'The Fires of the Fourth Crusade', pp. 73-74.

¹³⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 554/38-555/64; Madden, 'The Fires of the Fourth Crusade', pp. 77-83. Madden has, however, underestimated the damage inflicted to the city by the second fire. A more useful guide concerning the fate of Constantinople's most celebrated structures is: W. Müller-Weiner, *Bildlexicon zur Topographie Istanbul*, Tübingen 1977.

¹³⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 570/33-38.

¹³⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 592/29.

¹³⁸ Queller & Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 193.

¹³⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 577ff.

¹⁴⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 648/38-43.

¹⁴¹ Nik.Chon., pp. 649/84-650/9.

adorned the Hippodrome.¹⁴² Since Niketas is the only contemporary author to record the events of 1204 from the Byzantine perspective, the importance of his testimony as a counterweight to the Latin version/s is of inestimable value.

In conclusion, we can say that Niketas seems to have made widespread and generous use of oral communications. His prominent position at the imperial court afforded him access to privileged and private information only obtainable from those belonging to the imperial court circle and high-ranking military officials. His choice to include details about the lives of important political figures intrigue us as much for their human interest as for their historical importance. On the other hand, Niketas' own observations and experiences loom large throughout the narrative, and this is especially true in his account of the post 1185 period, where the narration gains significantly in verisimilitude. The author's choice to report many accounts and spicy stories of popular origin invest the narrative with a vitality and widespread appeal that would otherwise be lacking. Finally, Niketas' gift for pictorial description allows the reader to visualise persons, objects, places and scenes of the past.

Methodological Approach

On reading the first pages of Herodotus, the modern reader is instantly intrigued to find himself inside the bedchamber of a Lydian queen undressing in preparation for bed. Awaiting her in the bed is the king and peering from behind the door is the captain of his bodyguard, who is placed there under the command of the king in order to verify for himself the incomparable beauty of the naked queen.¹⁴³ In the opening pages of Niketas' *Historia*, the reader finds himself inside the bedchamber of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos and his empress Eirene. The imperial couple are having an argument concerning the succession, and Alexios, who has grown weary of his wife's constant nagging, begins to reproach her in the following terms: 'O woman, sharer of my bed and empire...'¹⁴⁴ This method of reconstructing the past, based on the circumstantial recounting of words and actions, is the fundamental component of the narrative–speech format that characterises the corpus

¹⁴² Nik.Chon., p. 649/79-83. See S. G. Bassett, 'The Antiquities in the Hippodrome of Constantinople', *DOP* 45 (1991), pp. 87-96.

¹⁴³ Herodotus, I, pp. 11-17.

¹⁴⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 5/87-11.

of Ancient and Byzantine historical writing. It is mostly defined by richly detailed accounts of what people did, what people said and what people thought, while another major element is the fictitious speech, usually given in direct discourse and sometimes cast as sustained dialogue. The aim was nothing less than the imaginative recreation of historical events for the benefit of the reader.

Niketas employs this technique throughout his narrative. As a historian, he possesses an exceptional gift for describing scenes in a manner that gives us the illusion that the story is in fact unfolding before our very eyes. He can also enter the hearts and thoughts of historical figures and enliven them by his reporting of day-to-day human incidents. To cite a few examples out of countless others, the reader is present at the siege of Corfu (1148) to witness the heroic efforts of the Byzantine troops to climb the scaling ladder that reaches to the top of the citadel. From beneath, the Emperor Manuel Komnenos exhorts his men to brave the danger for the sake of glory, but suddenly, the ladder collapses and the valiant soldiers all plunge to a most pitiable death in the depths of the sea.¹⁴⁵ Later the reader is transported to the agora in order to witness a brawl that had broken out between the Byzantines and their allies, the Venetians. In that episode, the Venetians manage to steal the imperial ship and place on board an Ethiopian slave, who is acclaimed emperor and paraded before all so as to ridicule Byzantine ceremonies and mock the dark-skinned Manuel.¹⁴⁶

The reader is also present in Constantinople during the official visit of sultan Kilij Arslan II (1162). He is a spectator at the Hippodrome, when a certain Turk, dressed in a long white robe, attempts to fly off one of the towers. As the Turk flaps his arms in the manner of a bird poised for flight, the audience can be heard shouting repeatedly, 'Fly', 'Fly'.¹⁴⁷ Later, within the imperial palace, Manuel leads the sultan inside a chamber filled with gold and silver coins, precious ornaments, and the finest linens. He presents these as a gift to the sultan, who seized with wonder, remarks that 'if he were master of such vast amounts of money, he would have subjugated his enemies long ago.'¹⁴⁸

During the winter of 1154-55, we find the recalcitrant Andronikos Komnenos lying in the embraces of his niece and mistress, Eudokia Komnene, in his tent in Pelagonia. Eudokia's relatives, incensed by the scandalous affair, surround the tent

¹⁴⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 82/66-85/39.

¹⁴⁶ Nik.Chon., pp. 85/40-86/86.

¹⁴⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 119/55-120/81.

¹⁴⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 120/90-121/22.

with armed troops in order to capture Andronikos. Eudokia, who was somehow informed of the plot, relates it to her lover and proposes that he dress in female clothing and pretend to be one of her chambermaids. Andronikos refuses to take part in the unmanly charade, and instead cuts a hole through the tent with his sword and leaps forth to engage his enemies.¹⁴⁹

One of the most colourful episodes in the *Historia* is the murder of Stephanos Hagiochristophorites by Isaakios Angelos. This episode, perhaps more than any other, brings out Niketas' extraordinary gift for pictorial description and demonstrates that he was a master of this narrative technique of recreating historical events. Hagiochristophorites arrives at the house of Isaakios Angelos, near the monastery of Peribleptos, in order to arrest him. It is late afternoon on 11 September 6794 [1185]. Upon entering the courtyard, he orders Isaakios to come out. The latter, suspecting his imminent death, burst forth on horseback with his sword drawn. Niketas even describes his appearance: he wore a cloak of two colours, which separated into two pieces at the waist and his head was bare. The terrified Hagiochristophorites attempts to gallop from the scene on mule-back, but just as he reaches the gate, Isaakios strikes him in the middle of the skull. While Hagiochristophorites lies on the ground 'like a fatted beast besmeared in its own blood', Isaakios, with his sword in hand, rides full-speed through the Mese, shouting to all that he had killed Stephanos Hagiochristophorites.¹⁵⁰

It is difficult to tell how accurate these detailed narrative events are. Although, theoretically speaking, the *sine qua non* of Byzantine history was the truth, it is only to be expected that in this type of reporting, often based on hearsay, historians exaggerate, embroider and falsify. In Niketas' case, we can point to the aforementioned scene where Manuel Komnenos dazzles Kilij Arslan with his wealth, whereupon the sultan cries out that if he had such amounts of money, he could have subjugated many territories long ago. A conspicuously familiar scene can be found in the narrative of the historian Anna Komnene, where Alexios I leads the crusader leader Bohemond into a room in the palace that he has filled with money and all sorts of valuable objects. The amazed Bohemond then says: 'If I possessed so much money, I would have become master of many countries long ago'.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Nik.Chon., pp. 104/49-105/71.

¹⁵⁰ Nik.Chon., pp. 341/65-342/9.

¹⁵¹ Anne Comnène, III, p.233/1-10; Nik.Chon., p. 120/94-121/15.

The similarity is too great to be dismissed as a coincidence. More likely is the scenario that Niketas lifted this episode from his predecessor Anna Komnene and inserted it into his own narrative. Manuel Komnenos may have offered the sultan money and gifts, but it is highly unlikely that the scene described by Niketas ever occurred, and even if it did, Kilij Arslan could not have possibly spoken the same words in 1162 that Bohemond had spoken in 1097. The scene had more to do with Niketas' desire to draw a negative comparison between the wealthy and effeminate Greeks and the authentic strength of the uncorrupted barbarians – an ancient theme repeated over and over again in Byzantine literature.¹⁵² In fact, Niketas comes back to it in the narrative on numerous occasions, the most famous perhaps being the reception of the envoys of the German Emperor, Henry VI by Alexios III Angelos on Christmas day 1196.

According to Niketas' story, the Emperor Alexios donned his magnificent imperial robe adorned with precious stones and commanded his retinue to put on purple garments interwoven with gold. So astonished were the Germans by this display of wealth and flamboyance that they immediately observed: 'The Germans have neither need of such spectacles, nor do they wish to become worshipers of ornaments and garments secured by brooches suited only for women whose painted faces, headdresses and glittering earrings are especially pleasing to men'. To frighten the bewildered Greeks, they further said: 'The time has now come to take off effeminate garments and put on iron instead of gold.'¹⁵³ The intimidating boasts and veiled threats that the historian attributes to the German ambassadors can hardly be taken to reflect anything that was actually said during the official negotiations. Niketas' description has less to do with historical reality and more with his intention to demonstrate why Byzantium succumbed to foreign aggression. Indeed, it is again no coincidence that more than a century earlier, Theophylact of Ochrid had warned that golden vestments could not deter blood-thirsty barbarians, and that the ruler who dressed in such attire would be ridiculed as being soft and effeminate.¹⁵⁴ Thus Niketas is not being unusually perceptive here, but merely repeating a familiar *topos*

¹⁵² This common *topos* is discussed in Chapter III.

¹⁵³ Nik.Chon., p. 477/66 ff.

¹⁵⁴ Theophylact of Ochrid, *Opera*, ed. P. Gautier, CFHB, I: *Discours, traités, poesies*, Thessaloniki 1980, p. 193.

that his readers would instantly recognise. Once again the strength of the unadorned barbarian is pitted against the weakness and effeminacy of the Greeks.¹⁵⁵

But if Niketas moulded such scenes so as to fit his purpose, this could suggest that entire episodes of this sort may have been simply invented by the historian. This is not because Niketas was a 'bad' historian who did not care for the truth; but because he, along with his contemporaries, conceived history in a very different way than we do. The purpose of this method of narration was to present events with such verisimilitude that they seemed to be happening before the reader's eyes, as if on stage. Accuracy was, by consequence, less important and given the fact that these events occurred in the Middle Ages, almost impossible to attain. Thus invention and embroidery were often called to fill the void of ignorance, and imaginative re-enactment was regularly required to supplement the incomplete reports of witnesses.¹⁵⁶

However, as suggested above, it was not only out of ignorance that Niketas chose to deceive the reader, for time and again he consciously sacrifices accuracy to purpose and style. This is not only evident in the manner in which Niketas often manipulates the information derived from his written sources, but also in the ways in which he exploits the ancient technique of the fictitious speech. In Ancient and Byzantine historical writing, a speech was far more detailed than any narrative episode, and therefore much of what is in the speeches is necessarily the creation of the historian himself.¹⁵⁷ In Niketas' case this is immediately apparent in the language and also in the selection of the speeches, their format and emphasis. On occasion, Niketas' speeches are simply speeches of exhortation where the protagonist, either the emperor or the commander of the forces, addresses his troops before a decisive

¹⁵⁵ See also Niketas' description of the Komnenoi prior to the battle of Myriokephalon (1176). According to the historian, the relatives of the emperor wore gold collars and bracelets, necklaces with sparkling gems and precious pearls (Nik.Chon., p. 179/52-57). On their advice, Manuel Komnenos pursued the war against the Turks and was utterly defeated.

¹⁵⁶ This was recognised long ago by Franz Grabler, *Die Krone die Komnenen: Die Regierungszeit der Kaiser Joannes und Manuel Komnenos (1118-1180) an dem Geschichtswerk des Niketas Choniates*, Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber, VII, Graz-Vienna-Cologne 1958, p. 21: 'Niketas muß in allem ein antiker Schriftsteller beurteilt werden. Die historische Wirklichkeit in all ihren zufälligen Kleinigkeiten und Begleitumständen ist ihm nicht sondern wichtig. Man kann ihm großen und ganzen vertrauen, aber bei Einzelheiten muß man immer damit rechnen, daß er der besseren Wirkung zuliebe umgestaltet und ausgestaltet. Vor allem muß man auch seinen den Effekt suchenden Stil berücksichtigen, der oft zu falschen Meinungen verführen könnte. Niketas ist eben mehr Dichter als Wissenschaftler.'

¹⁵⁷ For the fictitious speech in ancient historiography see: F.W. Wallbank, *Speeches in Greek Historians*, Oxford 1965; M. Grant, *Greek and Roman Historians: Information and Misinformation*, London 1995, pp. 44-53.

military encounter.¹⁵⁸ However, speeches also provide the historian with the opportunity to develop a particular theme of the narration and to show a historical character in depth.¹⁵⁹

Regarding the language of the speeches, it is obvious that in places, they are entirely the construction of the historian. For example, it is highly unlikely if not impossible that the leader of the Vlacho-Bulgarian revolt, Asan could quote Herodotus or that the French King Louis VII could cite Homer. The speeches are also replete with abstract ideas and often contain little of what relates to the situation at hand. In inventing the words, Niketas most often uses this technique to develop his own ideas about a particular situation or an individual. This is evident in the speech of John II Komnenos. This speech is the longest and the most elaborately worked in the *Historia*. On this occasion the dying emperor designates his youngest son, Manuel as heir to the throne before an audience of his kinsmen, friends, dignitaries and officials.

The climax and focal point of the speech is clearly the succession. In this section, Niketas, utilising his rhetorical talent to the full, carefully lays out argument upon argument in order to justify the somewhat irregular choice of the youngest son of the emperor as heir to the throne.¹⁶⁰ This is in line with the subject matter of the speech as reported by Kinnamos and reflected in the contemporary encomia.¹⁶¹ However, another section of the speech reveals that although John allegedly spoke these words in 1143, Niketas, who set them down a half century later, had his own agenda in mind, which was nothing else but an attempt to allude to and reflect upon the political conditions of his own time. Thus Niketas portrays the emperor expounding his beliefs on the general theme of imperial succession.

¹⁵⁸ See for example speeches of Manuel I Komnenos and Andronikos Kontostephanos: Nik.Chon., pp. 83/93-8, 154/58-155/90.

¹⁵⁹ In total there are eleven set speeches in the *Historia*: (1) speech of the dying John II Komnenos to his troops 42/29ff; (2) speech of the French King Louis VI to the crusaders 68/74-70/42; (3) short address of Manuel I Komnenos to his troops 83/93-8; (4) speech of the general Andronikos Kontostephanos to his troops in Hungary 154/58-155/90; (5) speech of the general Andronikos Kontostephanos to his troops in Egypt 164/62-166/24; (6) speech of the caesar Renier of Montferrat to his followers in Constantinople 238/3-239/33; (7) speech of Andronikos I Komnenos to his assembly 327/70-328/25; (8) brief address of Isaakios II Angelos to his followers 385/39-59; (9) speech of the Vlacho-Bulgarian rebel leader, Asan to his followers 466/46-467/86; (10) brief address of Andronikos Kontostephanos and Basil Kamateros to Alexios III 486/29-40; (11) brief address of the *parakoimomenos*, George Oinaïotes to the war council 504/54-70.

¹⁶⁰ Nik.Chon., pp. 43/71-46/40.

¹⁶¹ Kinnamos, pp. 26-29; Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 435.

John Komnenos warns his listeners that the Byzantines will only prevail over their enemies if they entrust the succession to God. The Almighty should then grant them a sovereign who is not devourer of the people (δημοβόρος), or who does not falsify his name (τὴν κλησιν ψευδόμενος), or who is not capricious (τὸ ἦθος ἀνώμαλος) and does not govern the empire according to his personal whim¹⁶² – in other words one who is not a tyrant. He then reflects that the choice of emperor is of the utmost importance; for if he is virtuous (ἀγαθνομένου) the Byzantines will prevail, but if he is corrupt (κακυνομένου) affairs will take a turn for the worse.¹⁶³ This warning then, which sounds more like an exposition of Byzantine political philosophy, fits better with the political situation of the late twelfth century, where tyrant upon tyrant succeeded to the Byzantine throne, rather than that of the mid-twelfth, where the succession was more or less regularly passed down from father to son. The words that Niketas cleverly attributes to John Komnenos are nothing more than his own thoughts on the precarious political circumstances of his own times.

The speech that Niketas attributes the Vlacho-Bulgarian rebel leader, Asan is a further indication that Niketas often uses these fictitious speeches as mouthpieces for his own views. Following the deposition of Isaakios Angelos, the new emperor, Alexios III, organises a campaign to deal with the Vlacho-Bulgarian rebels (autumn 1195). There is an atmosphere of anxiety and distress in the rebel camp due to the fame that Alexios had acquired as a skilful and capable warrior. Asan attempts to ease the fears of his compatriots with the following declaration. He points out that Alexios had never distinguished himself in battle nor had he endangered himself for his compatriots.¹⁶⁴ As a result, it seems that he did not receive the crown as a reward for his labours (μὴν μισθὸν καμάτων) but by a game played by cruel fortune (τύχης ἀγνώμονος πέπτευμα).¹⁶⁵ This is in fact a reversal of Niketas' own argument as it appears in one of his orations dedicated to Alexios III Angelos. In what is clearly an obvious attempt to publicly justify the usurpation, Niketas claims that Alexios did not receive the crown through the laws of inheritance, but as a reward for his virtue and his labours (ἄθλον ἀρετῆς καὶ καμάτων ἀντίδοσιν).¹⁶⁶ In this instance it appears that the historian's true opinions are conveyed by the enemy.

¹⁶² Nik.Chon., p. 43/59-64.

¹⁶³ Nik.Chon., p. 43/64-70.

¹⁶⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 466/49-59.

¹⁶⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 466/59-61.

¹⁶⁶ *Orationes et epistulae*, pp. 57/21-58/14.

Much the same can be observed with alleged conversations. A prime example are the imprudent remarks concerning the severe taxation policies of Manuel Komnenos that Niketas attributes to a common rank-and-file soldier in the midst of the battle of Myriokephalon.¹⁶⁷ A further example is offered by the alleged playful repartee between the Vlacho-Bulgarian leaders, Peter and Asan. The historian reports a conversation between the boastful and undaunted leaders of the Vlacho-Bulgarian revolt, who were celebrating their continuous victories over the Byzantine army. In an ironical jest, they propose making Isaakios II Angelos emperor of their own nation and pray to God that the worthless Angelos dynasty would be granted a long reign, so that they may continue their successes unhindered.¹⁶⁸ In all the above instances it is clear that Niketas is not reporting actual conversations or speeches, but merely attributing his own opinions and criticisms of the political conditions of his own day to various historical figures in the narrative. Thus whether the historian selects the Emperor John II Komnenos, the rebel leaders Peter and Asan, or a common soldier, it is clear that the characters of the story are always made to express his own views.

This can be understood more easily when we take into account the lack of freedom of expression in an authoritarian society such as Byzantium and the constraints placed upon our historian when composing the original version of his work. The technique of the ancient speech, much like other rhetorical devices Byzantium had inherited from antiquity, often served as tools of expression and criticism in a society that inherently possessed rigid ideas concerning the political freedom of its citizens and often viewed historiography as a branch of imperial propaganda.¹⁶⁹ In Niketas' case this becomes blatantly obvious when one compares the different versions of his historical work. It is not coincidental that only in the final version our historian no longer feels compelled to hide or disguise his opinions, but is able to state with confidence: 'I will not conceal that Manuel Komnenos strove to increase taxation.'

In all, the speeches, the conversations and the story telling that characterise Niketas' narrative go back to the Homeric tradition of epic poetry that had such a tremendous influence on ancient historiography and at every juncture it is obvious that Niketas is utilizing the historical methods of the ancient tradition. Again, it would

¹⁶⁷ Nik.Chon., p.186/60-63, 71-73 (for this incident see also Chapter II).

¹⁶⁸ Nik.Chon., pp. 436/89-437/15.

¹⁶⁹ See discussion in R. Scott, 'The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Historiography', in M. Mullett & R. Scott (eds.), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, Birmingham 1981, 60-74.

be a grave error to explain this on the grounds of blind ‘imitation’ of ancient models. It was rather an awareness of working within a tradition of historiography that had originated in antiquity. In fact, in an often-quoted remark Niketas reveals a remarkable consciousness concerning the origins, duty and significance of his task as a historian. Upon commencing his lamentable account of the cataclysmic events of 1204 and the collapse of Byzantium thereafter, he cries out: ‘But now even my power of speech fails me...for how can I devote History, the most useful and beautiful invention of the Greeks, to the recounting of the deeds of the barbarians against them?’¹⁷⁰

A further ancient technique that was brilliantly exploited by Niketas is digression. The aim of this technique was to offer supplementary information that included an extraordinarily wide range of themes, such as geography, topography, climate, the customs of foreign peoples, or even reporting sensational stories, omens, love affairs and the like. The overall framework of the *Historia* is straightforward and relatively easy to follow as the text is divided strictly in accordance with imperial reigns. However, the structure of the narrative is not, as events are often narrated in a thematic rather than a chronological order, thus resulting in a great deal of confusion for the modern reader. This problem is compounded by digression.

Niketas’ method of narration is to digress frequently, sometimes at great length, but to bring back the story to the point of departure. Before narrating Manuel’s relations with the Hungarians, Niketas, for the sake of historical clarification (σαφηνείας δ’ ἔνεκα τοῦ ἱστορεῖν) summarizes the recent internal developments in Hungary since roughly the mid-1150s and brings the narrative back to 1162 to commence from the chronological point of Manuel’s interference in Hungary.¹⁷¹ In the same manner, before reporting the arrest of all the Venetians in the empire on Manuel’s command (12 March, 1171), he deviates from the narrative in order to give the geographical location of Venice, the characteristics of its people and their past relations with Byzantium.¹⁷²

On several occasions he will digress in order to report something related to the historical action. For example, when the *megas doux*, Stephanos Kontostephanos was struck by a stone and killed during the siege of Corfu, Niketas inserts the following

¹⁷⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 580/94-95. For the profound effect of Ancient historiography on Niketas see also Grabler, *Die Krone der Komnenen*, pp. 18-21.

¹⁷¹ Nik.Chon., p. 126/48-65.

¹⁷² Nik.Chon., p. 171/41-55.

information. The death of Kontostephanos was prophesied by Patriarch Kosmas Attikos, who had been accused of conspiring against Manuel and ousted from the patriarchal throne (1147). Niketas gives us some information concerning the patriarch's background, his character and the means of his deposition. Apparently Kontostephanos, an intimate of the emperor, had insulted Kosmas and the latter predicted that he would have a 'stony fate', hence the connection with Niketas' main narrative.¹⁷³

Another such digression occurs in the midst of Niketas' reporting of the Third Crusade in 1189. In attempting to explain the conflict between the Byzantine Emperor Isaakios II Angelos and the German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, Niketas alleges that the gullible Isaakios believed the prophesies of Patriarch Dositheos, who predicted that the Germans would march against Constantinople and sack the city. At this point the digression on Dositheos is inserted. Niketas begins by telling us that Dositheos, who was very adept in the prognostication of future events, nursed the emperor's delusions of grandeur. For the purposes of sheer mockery, he paints a picture of Dositheos soothing Isaakios' anxieties 'in the manner that wet-nurses place newborn babies on their stomachs in order to calm them', and assuring him that like Timothy, Fortune would hand over conquered cities to him while he lay asleep (an allusion to Aelian, *Varia Historia*, 13.43). Finally, he goes on to relate in minute detail the manner of Dositheos' unlawful elevation to the patriarchal throne and his subsequent deposition.¹⁷⁴

Digressions also provide the historian with an opportunity to indulge his unique talent in the reporting of anecdotes and spicy stories, which however trivial or bizarre, always serve to highlight the personality of the subject. For example, in his reporting of the downfall of Theodore Styppeiotos, Niketas deviates from the narrative (ἵνα καὶ ἔτι μικρὸν παρακινήσω τῆς ἱστορίας μοι τὸν εἰρμόν) in order to provide the reader with additional information on the licentious and gluttonous nature of John Kamateros, the devious character responsible for orchestrating Styppeiotos' removal from the palace.¹⁷⁵ These kinds of anecdotal episodes focusing on the less than praiseworthy tastes and habits of prominent individuals abound: the court jester Chalivoures ridiculing Isaakios II Angelos for his

¹⁷³ Nik.Chon, pp. 79/88-81/31.

¹⁷⁴ Nik.Chon., pp. 404/14-408/90.

¹⁷⁵ Nik.Chon., pp. 113/88-115/46

promiscuity¹⁷⁶; John Poutzenos being mocked by street children in the marketplace because of his niggardliness¹⁷⁷; Andronikos Komnenos' use of ointments so as to enhance his sexual performance¹⁷⁸, and so on.

So far we have seen that Niketas' historical methodology was essentially based on the techniques invented by the ancient historians. Perhaps we should at this point say a few things concerning Niketas' own personal style of writing history. For one, Niketas is constantly signposting his narrative, giving notice where he is going, recapitulating and making forward and back references. Although chronological order and accuracy are certainly not Niketas' strong points, he nevertheless pays particular attention to maintain continuity and coherence in the narrative sequence. In book I of the reign of Manuel Komnenos, Niketas makes brief reference to the vast expenditures of this emperor, as the narrative, he assures us, will further demonstrate (ὡς προΐον δηλώσει τὸ λέγειν μοι).¹⁷⁹ In book II of the reign of the same emperor, he briefly discusses the public officials appointed by this emperor. At this point he merely introduces Theodore Styppeiotēs and informs the reader that this individual will be discussed at greater length later on.¹⁸⁰ In the same way, he introduces the Vlacho-Bulgarian rebel leaders Peter and Asan and provides us with the cause of their discontent with the emperor, but also informs us that he will discuss the events of the rebellion at a later time.¹⁸¹ When Niketas brings back an individual previously mentioned in the narrative, he often reminds the reader who this individual is with a back reference. For example, when a certain Poupakes harboured the fugitive Andronikos Komnenos, Niketas reminds us that it was this same individual who performed a glorious feat during the siege of Corfu.¹⁸² When Andronikos chose the eunuch Pterygeonites to carry out the execution of Maria-Xene, he again reminds us that this individual was responsible for poisoning Maria the *kaisarissa*.¹⁸³

At this point it can be reiterated that when Niketas comes to assessing events, he is concerned mostly with the assignment of responsibility. As we have seen, this had to do with his strong conviction, clearly articulated in the preface of the work,

¹⁷⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 441/23-442/28.

¹⁷⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 57/53-58/82.

¹⁷⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 320/77ff.

¹⁷⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 60/35-44.

¹⁸⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 54/84.

¹⁸¹ Nik.Chon., p. 369/70-73. For further examples see: pp. 116/67-69, 142/30-32.

¹⁸² Nik.Chon., p. 130/79-82.

¹⁸³ Nik.Chon., p. 269/88-89. For further examples see: pp.132/34-35, 137/69-70.

that history was the proper place for praise and retributive justice for leading individuals.¹⁸⁴ This conviction influenced not only the interpretation of events, but also the framework of the narrative. That is to say, Niketas' purpose dictated the manner of his writing. In the first place, the historian is less concerned with the chronological order of events, and more so with grouping them into a series of episodes, diversified by digressions, but linked through association and juxtaposition.

For example, Niketas spends a considerable amount of time discussing the disgraceful conduct of Manuel Komnenos towards one of his most trusted officials, Alexios Axouch. According to the historian Axouch was falsely accused of treason, and Manuel Komnenos, who was afraid of his officer's ever-growing popularity, readily believed the accusations. At this point in the narrative, Niketas comments: 'Whether [Justice] was rendered to the emperor because of this unjust action, is not to be recounted at the present time'.¹⁸⁵ He comes back to it much later in the narrative in an episode that concerns Manuel's illegitimate son, Alexios. This individual was found guilty of treason against Isaakios II Angelos, tonsured as a monk and confined to a monastery in the Balkans. For Niketas it was not a random occurrence that the young Alexios was confined to the same monastery that Manuel had long ago incarcerated Alexios Axouch, but it seemed to indicate that Justice had caught up with Manuel Komnenos, i.e. the young Alexios suffered because of his father's wrongdoing.¹⁸⁶

Similarly, after his deposition from the throne, Isaakios II Angelos was blinded at the Monastery of Vera, founded by Isaakios Komnenos, the father of Andronikos I. Earlier, Andronikos had been deposed by Isaakios and handed over to the Constantinopolitan mob to die a most gruesome death. Again, Niketas does not view this as a chance occurrence: 'whether Justice was rendered to Isaakios in accordance with divine Nemesis in that place because he had maltreated Andronikos, I leave for others to contemplate.'¹⁸⁷ It is perhaps to be expected that within this general framework of interconnected and juxtaposed episodes, the drawing of analogies between contemporary events and those of the distant past looms large. As we have seen, Niketas draws his most important analogy when he attempts to explain the capture of Constantinople by the armies of the Fourth Crusade. In that instance,

¹⁸⁴ See Chapter III.

¹⁸⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 146/36-37.

¹⁸⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 427/25-33.

¹⁸⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 452/3-4.

the historian turned to the *Life of Solon* by Plutarch in order to demonstrate the ruinous effects of tyrannical government.¹⁸⁸

On another occasion he looks to Flavius Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*. Having reported the events of the uprising of Maria the *kaisarissa* (1181) against the regency regime of her stepmother, Niketas proceeds to criticise both Maria and the imperial party for waging the battle on the sacred precinct of Hagia Sophia and draws an analogy between the deplorable behaviour of the present-day Byzantines and that of the Roman general Titus, who besieged Jerusalem in ancient times, but distinguished himself in his efforts to preserve the Temple of Solomon from destruction.¹⁸⁹ In a similar fashion, he draws a negative comparison between Isaakios' sacrilegious practice of adorning his imperial garments with ornaments stripped from holy crosses and the exemplary use made of the symbol of the faith by Emperor Constantine I, who fastened to his horse's bridle one of the nails with which Jesus Christ was transfixed to the cross.¹⁹⁰ Again, in discussing the efforts of Manuel I Komnenos to reduce the landed wealth of monasteries, Niketas is reminded of the similar but failed attempts made by Nikephoros II Phokas in the tenth century.¹⁹¹

Finally, the ancient tradition, which as we have seen had a profound affect on our historian's methodological approach to his subject, is used in an extensive manner as a principal way of adorning the narration of events. The plethora of ancient allusions and literary metaphors (along with the frequent citations to the Bible) define the narrative manner of Niketas and provide the author with an additional tool to enliven his cast of characters and underscore the importance of what was being said. These allusions and metaphors not only indicate the wide spectrum of Niketas' learning, but also the great extent to which he relied on his literary skills in the composition of the *Historia*. Here we can cite a few examples to illustrate Niketas' use of these references in the text. According to the historian, John Komnenos routed the Pecheneg battalions as Moses had turned back the troops of Amalek by raising his hands;¹⁹² Manuel Komnenos was no more able to arrest Andronikos than Ixion could seduce Hera;¹⁹³ the Sicilian King, Roger II was not suspicious of his Kadmean

¹⁸⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 583/4ff.

¹⁸⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 241/70-87.

¹⁹⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 444/90ff.

¹⁹¹ Nik.Chon., p. 207/85-91.

¹⁹² Nik.Chon., p. 15/91-93; *Exodus*, 17/11ff.

¹⁹³ Nik.Chon., p. 226/75-76; Pindar, *Pyth.*, 2/23-48.

victory in Greece;¹⁹⁴ and the King of Jerusalem, Almaric, put forward the pretext for Patroklos in order to procrastinate on the Egyptian expedition.¹⁹⁵

The empress Maria-Xene was like the laughter-loving golden Aphrodite, the white-armed and ox-eyed Hera and the long-necked Laconian;¹⁹⁶ and Maria the *kaisarissa* was like Agamemnon's unwedded daughter, Electra.¹⁹⁷ The wrath of Andronikos was like the conflagration of Sodom;¹⁹⁸ John Poutzenos was a prisoner of wealth in the manner that Akrisios kept Danae long ago;¹⁹⁹ and Alexios III was as far removed from knowing what was going on in the empire, as were the inhabitants of the outermost regions of Thule from the Romans.²⁰⁰ These allusions not only recreated ancient and mythological scenes for the benefit of the reader, but were also loaded with a specific meaning that the educated Byzantine instantly recognised. For example, it was well known that a Kadmean victory brought ruin to the victor, and thus Niketas was telling the reader from the outset that Roger's expedition against Byzantium would ultimately be unsuccessful. Thule was believed by Ptolemy and others to be an island north of Britain, in the most northerly region of the inhabitable world – and thus Alexios III was clueless as to what was going on in his empire. Similarly, in comparing Maria-Xene to the Laconian, i.e. Helen, Niketas was warning the reader that the empresses' beauty would be the seed of future trouble. It was a technique designed to capture the interest of the reader and adorn the historical narration with lively scenes from ancient events and mythology.

To conclude we can say that Niketas' historical method was based on the techniques invented by the ancient historians. The *Historia* is characterised by a narrative format that is mostly defined by story telling, conversations, speeches and digressions. Niketas obviously cares more for narrative coherence and presentation than chronological order or strict accuracy. Moreover, through his selection of historical episodes and the exploitation of the technique of the fictitious speech, the historian quietly imposes his own opinions without having to draw undue attention to himself. The multitude of laudatory remarks from copyists and readers that are found

¹⁹⁴ Nik.Chon., p. 74/39-40; Zenobius, 4/45.

¹⁹⁵ Nik.Chon., p. 161/68; *Iliad*, 19.302.

¹⁹⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 116/62-64.

¹⁹⁷ Nik.Chon., p. 170/34-35; Sophocles, *Electra*, 135.

¹⁹⁸ Nik.Chon., p. 324/90; *Genesis*, 19/24.

¹⁹⁹ Nik.Chon., p. 56/43-44.

²⁰⁰ Nik.Chon., p. 484/71-72

on the margins of his work testify that in the Byzantine world, Niketas had achieved a measure of recognition he so clearly deserves. According to one such comment: ‘Niketas was ordered by God to narrate these events to future generations.’²⁰¹

²⁰¹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. VII, n. 1,2: ὁ γὰρ θεόθεν ἐκελεύσθη τὰ τότε συμβάντα τοῖς μετέπειτα διηγήσασθαι. The most marginal notes of this type are found in codex V. I will here cite the most important ones, as rendered by van Dieten: fol.158^v (300/92ff) ὅρα τί φησι ὁ θαυμάσιος οὗτος ἀνὴρ περὶ τῆς ἰδιότητος τῶν Λατίνων· ὡς ἀληθῆ τε καὶ ἀναντίρρητα; 208/8^v (576/1ff) μονωδία τοῦ θαυμαστοῦ συγγραφέως ἐπὶ τῇ Κωνσταντινουπόλει οὕτως ἐνδιάθετός τε καὶ ἔμψυχος, ὥστε καὶ ἐξ ἀναισθήτων δάκρυα προκαλέσασθαι; 210 (590/73) εἶγε τῆς εὐγνωμοσύνης, ἅγιε ἄνθρωπε· τὸν γὰρ τῆς ἀγάπης ὅρον πεπλήρωκας; 201^v (535/3-11) προκατάστασις τῆς διηγήσεως τῆς ἀλώσεως Κωνσταντινουπόλεως· πάνυ δὲ θαυμασίως εἰς τὴν περὶ αὐτῆς διήγησιν ὁ μακάριος.

CHAPTER V

THE TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION AND READERSHIP OF THE *HISTORIA*

A discussion on the textual transmission and readership of Niketas' historical work should be first set against the background of the transmission and readership of other historical works of the same period.¹ A brief survey of the surviving manuscripts of Byzantine historians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries would initially suggest that Niketas' historiographical work was unique since in striking contrast to the extremely limited transmission of other historians, his work seems to have enjoyed wide circulation. The history of Leo the Deacon has survived, along with the *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos, in only one complete manuscript, *Paris. gr.* 1712, which dates to the second half of the twelfth century. Likewise, the history of Michael Attaleiates has survived in two manuscripts, *Coislin* 136 of the twelfth century and *Escorialensis* T-III-9 of the fourteenth century. The only manuscript to have preserved the history of Nikephoros Bryennios, which was used for the *editio princeps* of 1661, has now disappeared. The *Alexiad* of Anna Komnene has survived in two manuscripts dated to the twelfth century, *Laur. Plut.* LXX, 2 and *Coislin* 311; and the history of John Kinnamos has been preserved in one manuscript, *Vat. gr.* 163.²

The surviving manuscripts of the chronicles of the same time period, i.e. those of Skylitzes³, Kedrenos⁴, Zonaras⁵, Glykas⁶, and Manasses⁷ do not follow the pattern of this limited transmission, and like Niketas' work, seem to have enjoyed wide circulation. If the number of surviving manuscripts of a historical work can be

¹ The recent volume *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds. C. Holmes & J. Waring, Leiden 2002, offers valuable insights and fresh interpretations on literacy and the transmission of texts in Byzantium. For an overview of scholarship to date and the contributions of the volume see C. Holmes, 'Written Culture in Byzantium and Beyond: Contexts, Contents and Interpretations', pp. 1-31.

² For a list of manuscripts of the historians and chroniclers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries see M. E. Colonna, *Gli storici bizantini dal IV al XV secolo*, I, *Storici profani*, Naples 1956 and G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* I, *Die byzantinischen Quellen der Geschichte der Türkvölker*, Berlin 1958² (repr. 1983). For a detailed discussion on the transmission of these historians see K. Snipes, 'The *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos and the Textual Tradition and Transmission of the Byzantine Historians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries', *ZRVI* 27-28 (1989), pp. 43-61.

³ H. Thurn, 'Zur Textüberlieferung des Skylitzes', *BZ* 59 (1966), pp. 1-4.

⁴ R. Maisano, 'Sulla tradizione manoscritta di Giorgio Cedreno', *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 14-16 (1977-79), pp. 179-201.

⁵ T. Büttner-Wobst, 'Studien zur Textgeschichte des Zonaras', *BZ* 4 (1895), pp. 202-44, 594-97; U. P. Boissevain, 'Zur handschriften Überlieferung des Zonaras', *BZ* 4 (1895), pp. 250-71.

⁶ Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, pp. 431-32.

⁷ O. Lampsides, *Δημοσιεύματα περί την Χρονικήν Σύνοψιν Κωνσταντίνου του Μανασσή*, Athens 1980.

regarded as a possible indicator of the popularity of a book, then it appears that Niketas, along with the chroniclers of the same period had a much larger audience than the so-called 'classicizing' historians, even though his work has been traditionally grouped within this category of historical writing on the basis of form, language and content.

In his analysis of the textual transmission of the Byzantine historians of the eleventh and twelfth century, Kenneth Snipes has suggested that the different patterns of transmission observed between historians and chroniclers were due to the fact that these two groups wrote for different audiences.⁸ The historians composed their works for an audience of intellectuals closely connected to the imperial court, the high orders of the clergy and the highest-ranking government officials – in other words a very limited audience, which in turn explains the paucity of the surviving manuscripts. On the other hand, the chroniclers, who wrote in a much simpler idiom, were mostly read by monks and on occasion more educated readers interested in secular history.⁹ Although Snipes certainly notes that the history of Niketas constitutes an exception to this pattern, he does not attempt to explain the reasons for Niketas' widespread readership.

Riccardo Maisano has offered a possible explanation for this phenomenon that centres round the peculiarities in the transmission of Niketas' text. According to Maisano, the popularity of any given text was dictated by the author and his pre-selected audience. Historians who wrote for the limited few were not widely read and therefore not widely copied. Although Niketas certainly belongs to this group of writers, he himself permitted and indeed favoured the wider dissemination of his work by allowing his few chosen readers to participate in the 'literary process'. This means that the multitude of corrections, contaminations, alterations and additions evident in textual tradition of the *Historia* stem not only from Niketas himself, but also from his elite cast of chosen readers, who actively participated in the composition and diffusion of the text.¹⁰

⁸ Snipes, 'The *Chronographia*', p. 46. C. Mango, 'Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror', Inaugural Lecture, University of Oxford 1975, p. 4 (repr.) Idem, *Byzantium and its Image: History and Culture of the Byzantine Empire and its Heritage*, London 1984, no. II, also made the distinction between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' literature and suggested that the two groups of writings were addressed to different social classes.

⁹ Snipes, 'The *Chronographia*', p. 46.

¹⁰ Maisano, 'Varianti d'autore', pp. 78-79.

In addressing the points made by Snipes and Maisano, we should first note that strictly speaking, Niketas' historical work belongs to the post-1204 era rather than the twelfth century since it was only completed and 'published' after this date. Thus in his discussion of the textual transmission of Byzantine historians, Hans-Georg Beck has placed Niketas within the group of writers belonging to the later Byzantine era – *spätbyzantinische Geschichtsschreibung*.¹¹ Utilizing the number of surviving manuscripts as a barometer of readership once again we can immediately observe a sort of reversal of the popularity of histories versus chronicles. The chronicle of Theodore Skoutariotes survives in four manuscripts dated to the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The verse chronicle of Ephraim has been preserved in only one manuscript, *Vat. gr.* 1003 of the fourteenth century.¹² In contrast, the history of Niketas – in three clearly distinguishable versions – has survived in over a dozen manuscripts (and many copies), a significant number of which date to the thirteenth century. Likewise, the history of George Akropolites has survived in fourteen manuscripts, the greater number of which date to the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The oldest surviving copy (*Vat. gr.* 163) belongs to the thirteenth century.¹³

Viewed from within this context the textual transmission of Niketas does not seem so unusual. It is important to remember that Skoutariotes and Ephraim (I am not at all not denying their individual worth as historical sources) for the most part merely copied the information offered in Niketas and Akropolites. The difference in the number of surviving manuscripts of Niketas and Akropolites on the one hand and Skoutariotes and Ephraim on the other, would suggest that Byzantine readers preferred to read the originals rather than their copies found in the works of other authors. We shall return to this point later.

Concerning the contentions of Snipes, although it cannot be denied that there exist concrete differences between historians and chronicles, such a clear-cut differentiation in their audience can be misleading.¹⁴ Beck has already demonstrated

¹¹ H.-G. Beck, 'Überlieferungsgeschichte der byzantinischen Literatur: 1, Die historische Literatur', in *Geschichte der Textüberlieferung der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur I*, ed. H. Hunger et al., Zurich 1961, pp. 423-50.

¹² Beck, 'Überlieferungsgeschichte', p. 445.

¹³ See A. Heisenberg, *Studien zur Textgeschichte des Georgios Akropolites*, Programm des Königlichen humanistischen Gymnasiums zu Landau 1894, Landau 1894, pp. 5-55; Also R. Macrides, *A Translation and Historical Commentary of George Akropolites' History*, (PhD thesis, King's College London 1976), pp. 49-50.

¹⁴ The articles of Robert Browning have successfully demonstrated that the frequently expressed view, which holds that literacy in Byzantine society was extremely limited, is not only one-sided, but also

that chronicles were not only written for monks.¹⁵ For example, Zonaras was a high-ranking government official who certainly wrote for a secular and educated audience, and Manasses wrote from within the imperial court circle at the behest of a Komnenian princess.¹⁶ Moreover, Byzantine historians may not have had such a limited readership as has been assumed, if we take into consideration that the paraphrases/metaphrases of the most learned and difficult writers only begin to appear in the fourteenth century and that, on occasion, these circulated side by side with copies of the original work made in the same century. Principal examples are, of course, the fourteenth century paraphrases of Niketas, Anna Komnene and George Pachymeres.¹⁷

As far as the views expressed by Maisano are concerned, it is certainly true that Niketas' text underwent a 'living transmission' in the sense that it displays corrections, contaminations and alterations that in many cases can be attributed to interference by later hands (especially in lexical variation and seemingly indifferent alterations). However, we are less convinced that the author in fact initiated this process with the ultimate aim of a wider dissemination of his text, for it can also be assumed that given the casual and fluid nature of the 'publication' and circulation of texts in Byzantium, once the *Historia* left Niketas' hands the possible interference of readers and copyists began.

Having placed Niketas within the context of thirteenth rather than twelfth century historiography there are two questions that need to be addressed: 1) Who were the readers of the *Historia* in Byzantium? 2) Which version/s did they read? We would prefer to begin with the second question since it concerns the dissemination of

misleading: R. Browning, 'Literacy in the Byzantine World', *BMGS* 4 (1978), pp. 39-54 (repr.) Idem, *History, Language and Literacy in the Byzantine World*, Variorum 1989, no. VII; Idem, 'Further Reflections on Literacy in Byzantium', *Tò Ἑλληνικόν: Studies in honor of Speros Vryonis Jr.* I, New Rochelle, 1993, pp. 69-84.

¹⁵ H.-G. Beck, 'Zur byzantinischen Mönchchronik', *Speculum historiale. Geschichte im Spiegel von Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsdeutung*, (eds.), C. Bauer, L. Boehm & M. Müller, Munich 1978, pp. 188-97.

¹⁶ Beck, 'Überlieferungsgeschichte', p. 450.

¹⁷ H.-G. Beck, 'Der Leserkreis der byzantinischen Volksliteratur im Licht der handschriftlichen Überlieferung', in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, C. Mango & I. Sevčenko (eds.), Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium 1971, Washington DC, 1975, pp. 53-54; H. Hunger, *Anonyme Metaphrase zu Anna Komnene, Alexias xi-xiii*, *WBS* 15, Vienna 1981; A. Failler, 'La tradition manuscrite de l'Histoire des Georges Pachymère (livres I-VI)', *REB* 37 (1979), pp. 123-220; and more generally E. Kriaras, 'Diglossie des derniers siècles de Byzance: naissance de la littérature néo-hellénique'; J. Irmscher, 'Erwägungen zur Entstehung der neugriechischen Literatur'; A. Mirambel, 'Diglossie des derniers siècles de Byzance', in *Proceedings of the XIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford 1966, pp. 283-313.

the text and its availability to the reading public – a subject that would then naturally lead us to a discussion of its readership.

In the introduction to his edition of Niketas' *Historia*, van Dieten suggested that Niketas did not create a new manuscript for the a-version, but that instead he revised the original by inserting changes and additions between the lines, in the margins and on new pages.¹⁸ If we accept the editor's view, then the complex interrelation of the different versions and indeed the intricate nature of the entire transmission of the text become readily explainable. For example, although version b is preserved in a homogeneous group of codices (RMDF), version a (VA and P-after revision) is much more difficult to reconstruct as A is the result of a contamination among P, V and the now lost original draft which van Dieten has designated χ , and P² presents a series of corrections and additions based on an exemplar of version a. Thus the only direct witness of version a is represented in V. The 'intermediate' version (P-prior-to-revision and the original sections of W), by its mere existence reinforces van Dieten's theory, as it contains some of what a offers on top of b, without having been revised in these passages.

In fact, looking more closely at PW we can bear witness as to how the text may have actually been revised and copied. The important codex P (*Parisinus gr.* 1778, 13th century) presents a conspicuous and drastic revision, where the b-text was replaced with the a-text by the same writer. The revision is evident by the replacement of many leaves, the erasure of lines of the older text and their careful replacement by the newer version, and also a significant enlargement of the text on the margins of the manuscript.¹⁹ However, van Dieten rejects the possibility of a common exemplar for P and b (actually β , the lost exemplar of RMDF) because P offers certain passages (not stemming from its revision), which are missing in b but have the same character of the additions found in a. Therefore P-prior-to-revision takes an intermediary position between b and a.²⁰ The older section of W (with some deviations) offers the b-text, but this codex was fragmentarily added to by two

¹⁸ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. LXXXIV. The best evidence for this conclusion is the observation of linking errors common to both versions of the text.

¹⁹ van Dieten discusses this important codex in greater detail in a more recent article: 'Niketas Choniates und Codex Parisinus Graecus 1778', *JÖB* 44 (1994), pp. 48-56. The article was written in response to J. Irigoin's contention (in 'Editions et rééditions d'auteur au début du XII^e siècle. A propos de l'Histoire de Nicétas Choniates', *REG* 91 (1978), pp. 571-74) that codex P either represents the autograph text of Niketas or is the exemplar of a work of Niketas' secretary who was ordered to carry out the alterations suggested by Niketas.

writers, who inserted here and there large sections of the a-text, and thus in some instances W agrees with b and in others with a.²¹

The confused transmission of Niketas' text is reinforced by a further observation. Two manuscripts (M and C), which belong to version b leave out the final sentence of the b-text that they had copied thus far, which contains an abrupt ending (614/7-10) and continue with the text of version a!²² All this suggests that Niketas did not produce a new manuscript for the a-version. It further implies that while version b was 'published' by Niketas, hence the homogeneity of the manuscripts belonging to this family, version a, which was unfinished at the time of the author's death, never saw such a publication. In fact, when we consider that Niketas' unfinished reworking of the text (=a) forms the basis of V, the paraphrase, the additions made in D (of the b-text) and in W, as well as the revision of P,²³ we can glimpse at the complicated process of the transmission of Niketas' revised text – a process that the author most likely neither directed nor controlled – and one that penetrated almost every family of our existing text and permitted interference by later hands.

In the ancient world a 'second edition' of a published text could easily lead to many difficulties. The nature and conditions of 'publication' itself, defined as they were by private circulation among friends and acquaintances, made it less likely that a second edition could supplant its predecessor than in the modern world. In this instance the case of Cicero is instructive, as his attempts to revise his works did not affect all the copies from which our archetypes descended. Instead the two versions circulated side by side throughout antiquity with horizontal rather than vertical transmission taking place. Moreover, as there was no copyright, the private circulation of a text or, better still, a specific version of a text could gradually lead to full-scale 'publication', with or without the consent of the author.²⁴

²⁰ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LXX-LXXI.

²¹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LXXIX-LXXXI.

²² van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. LVI.

²³ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. CI.

²⁴ L. D. Reynolds & N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars. A Guide to the transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, Oxford 1991³, p. 215. The standard work on second editions in antiquity is H. Emonds, *Zweite Auflage im Altertum: kulturgeschichtliche Studien zur Überlieferung der antiken Literatur*, Leipzig 1941.

There is no reason to assume that the conditions of the circulation of books in Byzantium were any different – and in fact all our evidence points to the contrary.²⁵ In the case of Niketas, the complex interrelationship of the versions of his history already suggests that these circulated side by side with horizontal transmission taking place and that version a did not succeed in completely supplanting its predecessor. However, we are in a position to either confirm or deny what our primary witnesses, i.e. the manuscripts of Niketas' History hint at by comparing them to our secondary textual witnesses.

The most important secondary witnesses of the textual transmission of the *Historia* are the paraphrase and the chronicles of Theodore Skoutariotes and Ephraim. Other secondary textual witnesses, such as the history of George Akropolites, the verse chronicle of Joel, the continuator of Manasses and Constantine Stilbes contain too little of Niketas' text to be of any significance for our discussion.²⁶ Of course, the principal issue discussed here shall be from which version/s of Niketas' *Historia* were later writers working. This in turn will aid us in offering some suggestions concerning the publication and circulation of the versions of Niketas' text. We shall begin with the paraphrase.

The Paraphrase

The paraphrase of Niketas' text is preserved in four manuscripts: *Monac. gr.* 450 (14th century) =B, *Vind. Suppl. gr.* 166 (14th/15th century) =X, *Scor.* Ψ-IV-17 (early 16th century) =S, *Paris. gr.* 3041 (14th century) =Y.²⁷ In the simplest terms the paraphrase (henceforth B) can be described as a 'translation' of Niketas' work into a more easily understood idiom that is characterised by the shortening and simplification of long sentences, the replacement of indirect speech by direct speech,

²⁵ H. Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz*, Munich 1989, p. 69; Idem, 'Antikes und Mittelalterliches Buch-und Schriftwesen, I, Buchwesen (6. Verbreitung des Buches)', *Geschichte der Textüberlieferung*, pp. 59-61.

²⁶ For these see van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XCI.

²⁷ The text of the paraphrase is the critical edition of the Niketas-Metaphrase by John Davis, *H «Μετάφραση» της Χρονικής Διηγήσεως του Νικήτα Χωνιάτη*, Ph.D Dissertation, University of Ioannina 2004. The main text of the edition is rendered exclusively from manuscript B, while the critical apparatus presents the variant readings of XYS. I have also used the critical apparatus of van Dieten, which includes some readings from the paraphrase and indicates agreements with various manuscripts of the Niketastext. For a description of the manuscripts see van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. XXXIII-XXXIV, XXXIX-XLI, XXXLIV-XLVII, and for their relationship to one another see J.

the translation of rare and archaising vocabulary into simpler terms, the use of simpler syntax and grammar, etc.²⁸

Van Dieten briefly discusses the problem of which version of Niketas' *Historia* the paraphrast used in the introduction to his edition. In the first place he notes the special relationship of the paraphrase with V as primarily witnessed from the agreement of V with the paraphrase against all other manuscripts on numerous, or indeed innumerable occasions. However, he also points to the existence of a special relationship of the paraphrase with W and also with AP, where these sections are missing in W. Finally, there are clear indications that, at certain places, the paraphrase follows the readings of version b. Thus the editor concludes that the paraphrast either worked from two exemplars, one from version b and one from a, or that he used a manuscript which contained a hybrid text (now lost) of Niketas' *Historia*.²⁹

In general terms, it is clear that the paraphrase has more in common with version a (and specifically with manuscript V) than version b. This is not only evident from the sheer number of verified readings between the paraphrase and V, but also from the critical character of the entire text, which stems from the alterations and additions of version a. Concerning V and the paraphrase the following list is indicative of their special relationship throughout the entire text:

106/92 τὴν κάθοδον καὶ τὴν ἀνοδον: V τὴν κάθοδον...καὶ ἀνοδον: B τὴν εἴσοδον καὶ τὴν ἔξοδον: APWb; 146/37 περισκοπεῖν: VB περιεργάζεσθαι: APWb; 169/1 χρησμός: VB προαγόρευμα: APWb; 222/60 βασιλεῖ: VB ἡγεμόνι: APWb; 263/44 μετέβαινε: VB μετέπιπτε: AW μετέβη: b ἔβλεψε: P; 372/50 ὁ βασιλεὺς κατ' αὐτῶν: VB κατ' αὐτῶν Ἰσαάκιος: APWb; 399/46 καταλιπών: VB ἀπολιπών: APWb; 409/21 ποθοῦντες: VB γλιχόμενοι: APWb; 497/85 καυστηριῶν: VB καυτηριῶν: APWb; 508/68 τεσσαράκοντα: VB τέσσαρα: APW; 566/28 ὑψωσε: VB ἀνύψωσε: APLOb.³⁰

Davis, 'A Passage of the 'Barbarograeca' Metaphrase of Niketas Choniates' *Chronike Diegesis*: Retranslated or revised? *Σύμμ* 10 (1996), pp. 127-42.

²⁸ For the language of the paraphrase see J.-L. van Dieten, 'Bemerkungen zur Sprache der sog. Vulgärgriechischen Niketasparaphrasen', *BF* 6 (1979), pp. 37-77; Davis, 'A Passage of the 'Barbarograeca' Metaphrase', pp. 130-32; and more general discussions in H.-G. Beck, 'Die griechische volkstümliche Literatur des 14. Jahrhunderts', *Actes du XIVe congrès international d'études byzantines* (Bucharest 1971), I, Bucharest 1974, pp. 125-38; Idem, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur*, Munich 1971; I. Sevčenko, 'Levels of style in Byzantine Literature', *XVI Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten I/1*, *JÖB* 32/1 (1981), pp. 289-312.

²⁹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LXXXVI-LXXXVIII.

³⁰ The above list is a mere sample of verified readings chosen at random from a much longer listing. For more examples see pp. 99/34, 102/79-83, 107/12, 124/20, 128/6, 134/79, 140/80, 147/67, 163/19,

Concerning the critical character of the paraphrase, like V, it offers the information that Manuel Komnenos was having an incestuous affair with his niece (54/70-74). For the birth scene of Alexios II (168/79-169-87), the paraphrast follows the version offered in VAP, which includes ridiculing Manuel Komnenos for his belief in astrology, rather than the simple announcement of the birth offered in Wb. The paraphrast also includes the lengthy and detailed criticism of Manuel Komnenos' financial policies (203/75-206/47), which is omitted in Wb. His portrait of Alexios the *protosebastos* is in line with that offered in V against APWb (224/33-225/46) and he includes the more damaging character portrait of Alexios omitted in Wb (244/48-59). The criticism of Andronikos Komnenos' apathetic reaction to the Norman invasion of 1185 that is omitted in b (320/77-322/55) is included in the paraphrase and the pitiful response of Alexios III to the Fourth Crusade offered in the paraphrase is in line with version VA against the more favourable assessment of Alexios in PLOb.

However, when we verify agreements between the paraphrase and APWb or APW, W alone, or AP, a more complicated picture emerges that suggests at the very least that the paraphrast could not have possibly been working from two exemplars of versions b and a.

APWb 155/83-90 χρεών...έστι: APWbB om.V; 167/54 ἀκοήν: APWbB ἐνήχησιν: V; 232/33 φάσκουσα: APWb φεύγουσα: V λέγοντες: B; 238/87 ἅγιον: APWbB ἱερόν: V; 377/53 σπονδὰς ἐκ βασιλέως δεξάμενος: APWb om.V ὄρκους ἐκ βασιλέως δεξάμενος: B; 384/4 ἱππότας: APWb om.V καβαλλαρίους: B; 411/88 φυλάξει: APWbB τηρήσει: V.

APW 125/26 Γουδελίου: APWB Βασιλείου: Vb; 151/58 ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὁ κατὰ τῶν Οὔγγρων πόλεμος καὶ ἡ νίκη τῶν Ῥωμαίων (ἡ τῶν Ῥωμαίων νίκη B): add. APWB in the title of book V of Manuel Komnenos; 237/66 τοῦ Μιλίου: add. APWB; 259/38 εἰ δὲ καὶ ἀληθῶς, οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν: add. APW εἰ κατὰ ἀλήθειαν ἦν, οὐ γινώσκω: B.

W 120/69 ὄψεις: W ὀφθαλμοὺς: B ψυχὰς: VAPb; 121/28 θησαυρῶν: WB συνθηκῶν: VAPb; 152/83 μέγας δούξ: WB δούξ: VAPb; 387/27 φοβηθεῖς: WB

164/38, 194/11, 223/7, 225/45, 228/39, 231/22, 238/90, 257/79, 262/95, 264/69, 295/48, 297/9, 367/36-39, 371/35, 373/68, 380/12, 399/48-49, 400/76, 408/8, 417/52, 421/4, 450/59-61, 494/6, 521/87, 529/6, etc.

πτοηθείς: VAPb; 458/44 τοιοῦτόν τι: WB τι τοιοῦτον: VAPb; 502/18 ὃν οἱ κοινοὶ Βαρδάριον καλοῦσιν: add. W ὁ νῦν Βαρδάριος λεγόμενος: B.

A/P 158/88 οἰκεῖα: A τὰ πλησίον ὄντα: B ἐκεῖ: VPWb; 168/61 εἶχεν: PB ἦγεν: VAWb; 250/26 θαλάττιος: PB ἐπιθαλάττιος: VAWb; 255/27 τοῦ δὲ βασιλέως Ἀλεξίου: PB τοῦ δ' Ἀλεξίου: VAWb; 268/60 θέλων: PB σπεύδων: APWb 495/42 εἰς: AB πρὸς: PW ἐς: V.

On the other hand, a series of combination readings from the different versions found throughout the entire text of the paraphrase would in turn suggest that our paraphrast was working from a hybrid text of the *Historia*, which in general follows version a, but in certain passages manifests clear contamination from version b. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this point (I have underlined the key phrases in each version):

161/65 συνδιασκέψωνται ἀμφοτέρω ὁ κοινῶς διαπράσσονται: b

(συνVP) διασκέψωνται κοινῶς ὁ διαπράσσονται: APWV

ἀμφοτέρω συνελθόντες, διασκέψωνται τὸ τί διαπράσσονται: B

339/6-9 ἐνάγεται παρὰ τῶν οἰκείων εἰς τὴν ἐσομένων πρόγνωσιν δι' ἐργασίας ἀποτροπαίου, καίπερ ταῖς τοιαῖσδε πράξεσι μηδ' ὅλως πρότερον προσέχων τὸν νοῦν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἀθεμίτους (ἀνοσίους W) ἀποτρεπόμενος: Wb
πρὸς τὴν διὰ θωπείας εἴτε καὶ θεραπείας τῶν ἐναγῶν δαιμόνιων πρόγνωσιν τῶν μελλόντων ὁρμᾶ, καθὰ καὶ ὁ παλαιὸς ἐκεῖνος Σαοῦλ εἰς τὰς ἐγγαστριμύθους ὕστερον ἔβλεψεν, ἅς ἐδίωκε πρότερον τὸ θεῖον ἑαυτῷ ἰλεούμενος: VAP

διὰ δαιμονικῶν πράξεων πρὸς λεκανομαντείας ὁρμᾶ καθὼς καὶ Σαοῦλ... ἐνάγεται δὲ εἰς τὴν τοιαύτην μυσarὰν πράξιν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων πρόγνωσιν παρὰ τῶν οἰκείων αὐτοῦ δι' ἐργασίας ἀποτροπαίου καὶ πονηρᾶς καὶ ταῦτα μηδόλως ἔχων εἰς τὰ τοιαῦτα τὸν νοῦν αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ' ὡς ἀνοσίας καὶ πονηρὰς πράξεις φεύγων ταύτας καὶ ἀποτρεπόμενος: B

363/26-27 τὸν βασιλέα ὠνείδιζεν ὡς ἀφίλικτον ἅμα καὶ ἀπανθρώπως ἐῶντα λιμῷ καὶ γυμνότητι: AW

τῷ βασιλεῖ κατῶνείδιζε τὸ ἀφίλοικτον ὡς ἐῶντι ἀφιλανθρώπως λιμῷ καὶ γυμνότητι: V

τὸν βασιλέα Ἰσαάκιον καὶ ὠνείδισε τὸ ἀπάνθρωπον καὶ ἀφιλάνθρωπον αὐτοῦ: B

546/65-66 νῦν δὲ τὸ εὐπτόητον τοῦ στρατεύματος καὶ τὸ μὴ εὐθαρσές (τοῦ κρατοῦντος add. LO): bLO

νῦν δὲ ἡ ἐνδελεχὴς τῆς φυγῆς ἔννοια καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν εὐπτόητον: VAP
 ἀλλ' ἡ δι' ὅλου μνήμη τῆς φυγῆς, ἣν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτοῦ εἶχε, καὶ τὸ τοῦ
 στρατοῦ περίφοβον: B

547/86-88 χαρίεις ὢν τὸ ἦθος, εὐῆλιξ καὶ ὀρθιος: bLO

ἦν δὲ τὰ μὲν ἐς πόλεμον ὁποῖος εἴρηται, οὐδὲ τὰ πρὸς κοινὴν διοίκησιν
 ἀπεξεσμένος πέριξ παντάπασιν, ἵνα μὴ λέγοιμι ὡς ἐνέκλινεν εἰς τὸ πάντῃ
 ὀλίγωρον· τὰ δ' ἄλλα οὐκ ἦν τις ἀπόβλητος: VAP

ἔχων τὸ ἦθος χάριεν καὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν ὀρθήν. ἦν δὲ πρὸς μὲν μάχην καὶ
 πόλεμον ὥσπερ εἶπον, πρὸς δὲ τὴν τῶν κοινῶν διοίκησιν παντελῶς
 ἀκυβέρνητος, ἵνα μὴ εἴπω, ὅτι παντελῶς ἐξέκλινεν εἰς ὀλιγωρίαν καὶ
 ῥαθυμίαν: B

548/94-1 ἔχων δὲ τὴν συνείδησιν βάλλουσιν ἐφ' οἷς ἀέκοντι γε θυμῷ τὸν
 ὁμογενιον ἠδίκησεν: bLO

ἔχων....ἐφ' οἷς ἠνόμησεν εἰς τὸν ἀδελφόν, τὸ χρεὼν ἐδεδίει καὶ τὴν
 πάντα περισκοποῦσαν τὰ θνητῶν πράγματα δίκην διηνεκῶς ὑπεβλέπετο:
 VAP

εἶχε δὲ καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ συνείδησιν διηνεκῶς τρώγουσαν καὶ διαπανῶσαν
 αὐτόν, ἐφ' οἷς εἴτε καὶ μετὰ γνώμης εἴτε καὶ παρὰ γνώμην αὐτοῦ
 ἐπλημμέλησεν καὶ ἥμαρτεν εἰς τὸν ἀδελφόν αὐτοῦ: B

These series of combination readings immediately arouse the suspicion that either the original Niketastext used here was 'contaminated' with interlinear or marginal notes, much like our PW manuscripts were, or that the copyist of this particular manuscript of Niketas had himself been working from such a text. If we assume that there was no clear indication which part of the text should be preferred, then it is also reasonable to assume that the original copyist or the paraphrast simply combined the variant readings. We shall return to this point later.

Like version b, the paraphrase offers a more detailed and comprehensive exposition of theological affairs.³¹ The reign of Alexios III is narrated in three, instead of two books, book III commencing from the arrival of the Fourth Crusade in 1203.³² In the opening paragraph of book I of the reign of the same emperor, the paraphrast is clearly following version b, which largely absolves Alexios from any guilt in Isaakios' overthrow (453/3ff.): καὶ τοιούτῳ μὲν τρόπῳ ὁ Ἰσαάκιος ἀπὸ

³¹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. LXXXVII.

τῆς βασιλείας κατήχθη, οὐ μετὰ γνώμης μᾶλλον τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὡς ἐλέγετο, ὅσον ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ ὅλου στρατεύματος βίας καὶ συνδρομῆς κατ' αὐτοῦ τὰ ξίφη σπασάντων καὶ ἀποθανεῖν, εἰπόντων, εἰ μὴ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτὸς λάβοι καὶ ἀναδέξηται: B. He then, however, simply continues with the opening line offered in version a: καὶ αὐτὸν πάλιν τὸν Ἰσαάκιον μετὰ τὸ στερηθῆναι τὴν βασιλείαν ἵνα λάβῃ καὶ φωτὸς στέρησιν παρ' ἐκείνων ὧν ἐνόμιζεν ἔχειν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὡς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὀδηγεῖν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐπάνω αὐτῶν στηρίζεσθαι, τόσον ἦν τὸ κακόν. τί γὰρ κτλ: B. Thus what we have here is not a combination reading, but a sequential exposition of two variant readings offered for the same passage. It is tempting to hypothesise that one of these passages was perhaps written on the margin of the manuscript of the Niketastext (or again on the text that the copyist of Niketas was utilising) and that the paraphrast (or the copyist), unaware of which version was 'correct', simply rendered both in sequence.

As mentioned above, in narrating the reaction of Alexios III to the Fourth Crusade, the paraphrast clearly follows the more critical stance taken in version a. But again, contamination from version b is obvious. The paraphrase includes the passage on the cowardly behaviour of the Byzantine army commanders during their engagement with the Latins at Scutari in July 1203 (542/71), which is related in PLOb but not in VA. It is rather significant that the praise of Theodore Laskaris, again related in PLOb, but not VA (544/19, 545/65) also appears in the paraphrase.

However, as van Dieten has already noted, in some cases the paraphrase offers words or phrases not found in any of our extant manuscripts of Niketas. According to the editor, these could have only stemmed from the pen of Niketas himself, i.e. they were contained in the original manuscript used by the paraphrast, which is now lost (443/66, 484/64, 499/51, 511/59, 522/31). The best evidence for such a supposition is found on 546/80ff., as Alexios III prepares to flee Constantinople. Here the paraphrast adds the following sentence: καὶ φυγεῖν καὶ μὴ εἰς κίνδυνον ἑαυτὸν ἐκδοῦναι καὶ πειρασμόν, καθὼς ποτὲ καὶ ὁ Δαυὶδ ἐποίησε μετ' ὀλίγων ἀπὸ τῆς Σιῶν ἐξελθών. We could have dismissed this sentence as an addition made by the paraphrast himself, were it not for the fact that a conspicuously similar sentence is offered by Akropolites: τὰ πάντα χαίρειν ἑάσας φυγῇ ἐχρήσατο ἐκὼν ἀέκοντί γε θυμῷ, τοῦτο δὲ προσειπών, ὡς οἱ ἀκηκοότες ἔφασκον, τὸ Δαυὶδ φυγών

³² τόμος τρίτος τῆς βασιλείας κυρ' Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ (Ἄγγελου), ἔνθα ἡ διήγησις τῶν συμβάντων τῇ μεγαλόπολει ἀνιαρῶν: b; τόμος τρίτος τῆς βασιλείας Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Ἄγγελου, καὶ διήγησις περὶ τῶν συμβάντων ἐν τῇ πόλει καὶ τῆς ταύτης ἀλώσεως: B

ἐσώθη'.³³ Thus this addition most likely stems from a reading of Niketas, since the paraphrast was merely 'translating' the original, and Akropolites probably used the text as a source for his own history.

Further evidence that could support this hypothesis is the letter of Andronikos I Komnenos, addressed to certain public officials – a member of the Angelos family, and three other men identified as Synesios, Gabras and Lachanas, who are threatened with the penalty of death should they refuse to submit to Andronikos' rule. This letter is only preserved in the paraphrase and Skoutariotes (331/91 critical apparatus of the Niketastext): ἔγραψε δὲ καὶ πρὸς τινὰς τῶν τὰ δημόσια ἐνεργούντων ἐπιστολὴν ἔχουσαν οὕτως. ἀληθινὲ τοῦ ψεύδους πρωτάγγελε, σὺ ἀσύνετέ μοι Συνέσιε, σὺ γαῦρε Γαβρά καὶ σὺ ἀγοραῖε Λαχανᾶ ἤκουσαι τῇ βασιλείᾳ μου ἀδικεῖν ὑμᾶς τὰ πολλά, καὶ ἢ τὸ ἀδικεῖν ἐάσατε ἢ τὸ ζῆν· τὸ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν ὑμᾶς καὶ ζῆν οὔτε τῷ θεῷ ἀρεστόν ἐστιν οὔτ' ἐμοὶ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτῷ ἀνεκτόν· B. However, both the paraphrast and Skoutariotes seem to place the letter out of the proper narrative sequence. In the paraphrase it appears in the middle of a discussion concerning Andronikos' just punishment of corrupt public officials and Skoutariotes places it at the very end of the discussion of the reign of Andronikos.³⁴

This letter fits better on 287/21-26, where Niketas narrates the rebellion of the Prouseans against Andronikos (1184). According to the account offered in the extant manuscripts, Andronikos sent letters to the Prouseans offering them amnesty for their crimes if they open the gates of the city to him and arrest the rebels Theodore Angelos, Lachanas and Synesios. Niketas even uses an identical play on the words ἀσύνετον Συνέσιον and ἀγοραῖον Λαχανᾶν, and notes that in this instance he is quoting the exact words of Andronikos. Thus the citation of the original letter that is preserved in the paraphrase and Skoutariotes probably stems from a now lost manuscript of Niketas, which quoted Andronikos' exact words.

A comparison of the paraphrase and the manuscripts of the Niketastext has not provided us with an unequivocal result. However, when we consider the series of combination readings and the sequential exposition of variant readings from both versions offered in the paraphrase on the one hand, and verified readings between the paraphrase and APWb, APW, W or AP on the other, it becomes likely that the

³³ Akropolites, p. 6/6-8.

³⁴ Skoutariotes, pp. 362-63.

paraphrast (or again the original copyist) was working from a hybrid text of Niketas' *Historia*, which perhaps included interlinear and/or marginal alterations and additions. This could have easily caused confusion for the paraphrast (or the copyist), who may or may not have known which part of the text should be incorporated and which should be left out. Indeed, the choice may reflect the interests of the paraphrast (or the copyist) himself, as the greater attention shown to theological issues or the praise of Theodore Laskaris would indicate.

This suggestion is reinforced by the following considerations: 1) Niketas himself did not produce a new manuscript for version a and most likely revised his own text in a similar manner; 2) The existence of the 'intermediate' version PW and the contaminated manuscript A of version a; 3) The surviving manuscripts of the paraphrase were most likely copied from an original annotated manuscript of the paraphrase (now lost) rather than a manuscript of Niketas.³⁵ This final consideration could, of course, imply that perhaps the original paraphrase itself contained alternative readings between the lines and/or in the margins that stem from multiple readings in the original hybrid Niketastext. In any case, it is important to remember that the paraphrase is much more closely connected to a than it is to b. Thus even if we are faced with a hybrid text, this text would belong to version a and its contamination from version b would be at best minimal as far as content and linguistic choices are concerned.

Theodore Skoutariotes

The chronicle of Theodore Skoutariotes, metropolitan of Cyzicus is a work composed in the later part of the thirteenth century, which extends from the creation to the reconquest of Constantinople in 1261. The edition of the chronicle by K. N. Sathas as an anonymous *Σύνοψις Χρονική* (Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη VII, 1894) is based on the codex *Marc. gr. 407* (16th century).³⁶ The sources from which Skoutariotes compiled his narration have long captured the interest of historians. For

³⁵ As argued by Davis, 'A Passage of the 'Barbarograeca' Metaphrase', pp. 127-142.

³⁶ The identification of the author with Theodore Skoutariotes was made by A. Heisenberg, *Analecta. Mitteilungen aus italienischen Handsschriften byzantinischer Chronographen*, Programm des K. Liutpold-Gymnasiums in München für das Studienjahr 1900/1901, Munich 1901, pp. 5-16. For the chronicle see: K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (537-1453)*, Munich 1897²; pp. 388-90; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, pp. 526-28; Colonna, *Storici byzantini*, pp. 126-27; Hunger, *Literatur*, pp. 477-78.

the period prior to 1081, which is treated quite synoptically, Skoutariotes used, among other sources, the chronicles of Malalas and Skylitzes, as well as an unknown source that was also used by Manasses. The Komnenian period along with the events that occurred between the years 1204-1261, receive detailed treatment in the chronicle of Skoutariotes. His primary sources for this period were, of course, the histories of Niketas and Akropolites.

According to van Dieten, Skoutariotes followed Niketas consistently – commencing from the narration of the reign of John II Komnenos and ending with the capture of Constantinople (8/93-575/50 of the Niketastext) – at which point he started using Akropolites. As in the case of the paraphrase, van Dieten briefly discusses the problem of which version of Niketas' history was utilised by Skoutariotes. In the first place, the editor observes that Skoutariotes was clearly working from the b-text as far as the narration of Alexios III is concerned. However, he also notes that for previous sections of the text, the readings of Skoutariotes often agree with those of P-prior-to revision and the original text of W, i.e. the 'intermediate' version. Moreover, while a special relationship with W is apparent, the question of whether Skoutariotes utilised the exemplar of W (=χ) as a source is left open by van Dieten since Skoutariotes often agrees with APW, AW and PW.³⁷

At first glance it is obvious that Skoutariotes has much more in common with the b-text than the a-text. This is primarily evidenced by the uncritical character of his entire text, and not only for the discussion of the reign of Alexios III, which is, of course, in line with the text offered in version b. Concerning the reign of Alexios III, Skoutariotes (henceforth Sk) follows the b-text almost exclusively: 453/3ff. καὶ τόνδε κτλ: bSk; 459/54ff. ἐνδιατρίψας κτλ: bSk; 462/37 ff. ἀφικόμενος κτλ: bSk; 464/14-7 κἄν...αὐτοῦ: om. bSk; 465/18-32 πλείω...στρατεύματος: bSk; 465/32-467/90: om. bSk; 473/64-475/25 τίς...ἀποτρεψάμενος: om. bSk; 477/68-478/1 πρᾶγμα...καλλωπίζονται: om. bSk; 478/14-479/43 ἔνθα...ἀπεγένετο: om. bSk; 483/35-493/66 ἀλλὰ...φρόνημα: om. bSk; 508/67-509/17 τότε...σύνθημα: om. bSk; 519/44-520/69 τραπομένη...ἀμπεχόμενος: om. bSk; 524/84-526/33 οὐ...δεύτερον: om. bSk; 528/76-532/20 μετὰ...σπασάμενοι: om. bSk.

For earlier sections of the text, Skoutariotes and version b share a host of significant omissions of a critical character: 54/70-74 καὶ...ἔξανθήματα: om. PAbSk;

³⁷ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LXXXVIII-LXXXIX.

104/29-36 καὶ...συγκατέκειτο: om. WbSk; 114/29-40 ἥττων...καθεῖλκετο: om. WbSk; 143/51-54 κᾶν...ὑπόθεσις: om. WbSk; 144/77-83 ἵνα...Ἕλληνες: om. WbSk; 203/75-206/47 ὅτι...βασίλεια: om. WbSk; 242/16-18 ἄκων...προητοιμάκει: VAP^{mg} οὐκοῦν: WbSk; 244/48-59 καὶτοι...ὑπὸνωθρος: om. WbSk; 273/85-89 ἦν...γαστρὸς: om. WbSk; 320/77-322/55 δεῖσαν...ἐκωμῶδει: om. bSk; 436/89-15 τοσοῦτον...ἀντιπάλους: om. bSk; 451/70-75 ἦσαν...ἐξαλλαγαῖς: om. bSk.

In certain places Skoutariotes even omits critical passages that are given in the b-text: 72/83-85 νυνὶ...ὑπερκάθηνται; 95/29-96/49 ἐπεὶ...πράγματα; 209/59-210/71 πρὸς...γίνονται; 250/9-20 καὶ...ἀπηνέγκατο. This could be simply explained if we assume that Skoutariotes himself chose not to incorporate these passages into his text. On the other hand, however, Skoutariotes does include certain critical passages not offered in b: 103/9-18 οὐδὲν...μάλιστα (ὑπωπτεύετο...ἐπίσημον: 243/11-15 Sk); 274/13-14 τοῦ...ῥαβδοφόρων (καὶ...Θεοδώρου: 333/31-334/2 Sk); 442/38-47 προθέμενος...οὔτοσί (προθέμενος...ἀνέκειτο: 409/18-24 Sk); 443/59-444/10 ἀλλὰ...ὄφλημα (καὶ...αὐτό: 410/1-25 Sk). As van Dieten has already suggested, these most probably stem from the original text of W and P-prior-to-revision. This final observation should eliminate the possibility that Skoutariotes was working solely from an exemplar of version b.

However, when we verify readings between Skoutariotes and W, or APW, AW, PW, V, and even PLO for the final section of the text, we should also eliminate the possibility that Skoutariotes was working solely from an exemplar of W (=χ).

W 66/30 ἐμφύραντες: W(Sk 223/30) ἐμφύροντες: VAPb; 103/11-13 ἄ... περιδεές: om. WSk; 111/25 καὶ...ταῦτα: add. W(Sk 247/1-7); 172/65 προσόντων χρημάτων: W τῶν προσόντων αὐτοῖς χρημάτων: (Sk 281/2) κτημάτων: VAPb; 255/26-27 ὅτι...ὀλισθήματος: om. WSk; 313/35-36 ὅπως... διαπύρους: W(Sk 348/3-4); 339/24 πεπαιδευμένον τὰ τοιαδε: PW τὰ τοιαδε πεπαιδευμένον: (Sk 354/15) τετελεσμένον τὰ τοιαδὶ: VAb; 475/35 ἀρχὴν: W(Sk 418/22) βασιλείαν: VAPb.

APW 72/1 Γυμνοὶ: APW(Sk 228/18) Γυμνὸς: Vb; 88/27 οἱ πολέμιοι: add. APW(Sk 235/25); 143/43 περιδεεῖς οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν κρατούντων εἰσι: APW(Sk 261/17-18); 195/39 Δούκα: APW(Sk 296/8) Ἀγγέλου: Vb; 233/50 πέρας λαβεῖν: APW(Sk 331/27) τελέεσθαι: Vb; 258/6 δεινὸν: APW(Sk 325/18) κακὸν: Vb; 259/28 πικρότατος: APW(Sk 326/2) ἀπιστότατος: Vb; 407/76 κρατεῖν: APW(Sk 392/10) ἰσχύειν: Vb.

AW 105/65 ἀπενεχθῆναι: **AW**(Sk 244/5) ἄγεσθαι: **VPb**; 119/50 προκύπτειν: **AW**(Sk 250/3) προκύψειν; **VPb**; 176/51 σχηματιζόμενος; **AW**(Sk 282/25) πλαττόμενος: **VPb**; 224/38 τῇ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς παραδυναστεία: **AW** τῇ ἀνδρὸς παραδυναστεία: (Sk 308/6) τοῖς γινομένοις: **VPb**; 249/95 καταλλήλως τῷ ἐκείνου γένει καὶ μὴ ἐπαχθῶς προσφέρεσθαι: **AW** καταλλήλως τῷ ἐκείνου γένει προσφέρεσθαι: (Sk 320/28) μετρίως ἐκείνῳ προσφέρεσθαι: **VPb**; 265/93 ὑποχώρησιν: **AW**(Sk 329/23) ἄπαρσιν: **VPb**; 368/48 ἀδοτι: **AW**(Sk 370/16) ἀμισθί: **VPb**; 422/75 πρὸς τὸ φρούριον τὴν Πισσὴν: **AW** κατὰ τὸ φρούριον τὴν Πισσὴν: (Sk 400/22) ἐς τὴν Πίσσαν τὸ φρούριον: **P** πρὸς τὰ Ἄρμαλα: **V**.

PW 143/55 τὴν φύσιν (δὲ Sk) κακολογοῦσι: **PW**(Sk 264/21-22) κακῶς λέγων εὐλογεῖ τὴν φύσιν: **VA** τὴν φύσιν εὐλογοῦσι: **b**; 238/90 πρόναον: **PW**(Sk 314/22) προσκήνιον τοῦ νεώ: **Ab** πρόναον τοῦ ναοῦ: **V**; 408/94 χιλίους; **PW**(Sk 392/20) δισχιλίους: **VAb** 439/79 ἐκεῖνα γὰρ: **PW**(Sk 408/28) κάκεῖνα: **VAb**; 443/83 συμφέρειν: **PWA**^{mgyp} (Sk 410/16) συνάδειν: **VA**.

V 80/18 πατριάρχῃ: **V**(Sk 232/12) πατρὶ: **APWb**; 128/4 τούτου: **V**(Sk 255/25) τούτων: **APWb**; 179/62 ἔμελλον: **V**(Sk 285/10) ἥμελλον: **APWb**; 243/26 περὶ: **V**(Sk 317/170) ἐς: **APWb**; 264/61 χρησάμενοι πνεύματι: **V**(Sk 328/31) πνεύματι χρώμενοι: **PWb** χρώμενοι πνεύματι: **A**; 368/41 θαλαμηπόλοι νεάνιδες: **V**(Sk 370/8-9) θαλαμηπόλοις νεάνισι: **APWb**; 423/9 τυράννου: **V**(Sk 401/9) βασιλέως: **APW**.

PLO 536/29 κατὰ...πατρὸς: **om.** **LOSk**; 541/41-42 ναὶ...κείμενα: **add.** **PLO**(Sk 434/1-6); 545/37 ὠνόμασται: **PLO**(Sk 436/16) ὀνομάζεται: **VAb**; 548/7 ὅσον χρόνον: **PLO** ὅσον γὰρ χρόνον: (Sk 437/15-16) ὅσον: **VAb**; 563/69 λαός: **PLO**(Sk 444/9) λεώς: **VAb**; 570/22 ἐπίσημοι: **PLO**(Sk 447/16) διάσημοι: **VAb**; 571/50-51 ἦς...προκατείληπτο: **add.** **PLO**(Sk 448/6-8); 574/38 ἐλεεινολογίαις ὑπαγαγέσθαι (πραῦναι Sk): **add.** **PLO**(Sk 450/1).

These various combinations could in the first place indicate that Skoutariotes had access to more than one manuscript of the Niketastext. If we assume that was the case, then one of those manuscripts seem to have belonged to version b. The learned Skoutariotes was a known collector of manuscripts, whose possessions included the famous codex of Aristotle's *Poetics*, Photios' *Bibliotheca*, and *Paris. gr.* 1234, which

contained the *Panoplia Dogmatike* of Niketas.³⁸ However, Skoutariotes could not have possibly had access to a host of manuscripts of the Niketastext and what the above combinations then suggest is that he, like Niketas' paraphrast, was working from a hybrid text of the *Historia*,³⁹ closely related to the contaminated A manuscript and the 'intermediate' PW version. This last suggestion does not preclude the possibility that Skoutariotes also had access to a manuscript of version b – a possibility that we hold to be the more likely.

What is important to remember is that Skoutariotes is much closer to version b than he is to a. This is in the first place intimately connected to the manuscript or manuscripts that he was working from, and in the second to his own selection process. Skoutariotes, even more so than Niketas in version b, avoids overt criticism of the Komnenoi and their favourites, if indeed he is critical at all. Thus even if Skoutariotes had access, in one form or another, to all the critical readings of Niketas, it is not likely that he would have followed these. As we shall see, in this choice, he was not alone.

Ephraim

The early fourteenth-century verse chronicle of Ephraim narrates events from the reign of the Roman emperor Gaius to the recapture of Constantinople in 1261.⁴⁰ The pre-Komnenian period is treated quite briefly, while thereafter the narration is more detailed and especially so for the Nicaean period (1204-1261). The main sources from which Ephraim compiled his chronicle were John Zonaras, Niketas, and

³⁸ For this codex see J.-L. van Dieten 'Zur Überlieferung der *Panoplia Dogmatike* des Niketas Choniates. Codex Parisinus Graecus 1234', in *Polychronion. Festschrift für Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, I, Heidelberg 1966, pp. 166-80.

³⁹ This could also be indicated by combination readings found in Skoutariotes: 93/56-57 ὁ δὲ τοῦτον ὑποστὰς ἐς τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν τὸ ξίφος διελᾷ: VWb ὁ δὲ ἀντέπεισε τούτῳ καὶ κατ' ὀφθαλμὸν τὸ ξίφος ἐλᾷ: A^{ms}P ὁ δὲ ἀντέπεισι τούτῳ καὶ τὸ ξίφος εἰς τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν διελᾷ: (Sk 238/23-25); 106/77-78 ἀμφιπεριτροχάζειν ἐπίβουλον τὸν Ἀνδρόνικον: AW ἀμφιπεριτροχάζειν αὐθάδη καὶ βασιλειῶντα τὸν Ἀνδρόνικον: A^{ms}P διὰ ταῦτα ὁ Μανουὴλ ὑπέβλεπε τὸν Ἀνδρόνικον ὡς βασιλειῶντα καὶ ἐπίβουλον: (Sk 238/23-25); 231/16 Καματηρὸς: A^{ms}VPb Δούκας: AW Δούκας ὁ Καματηρὸς: (Sk 311/7).

⁴⁰ *Ephraem Aenii Historia Chronica*, ed. O. Lampsides, CFHB, Athens 1990. For the chronicle see in general: Krumbacher, *Literatur*, pp. 390-93; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturica*, I, pp. 256-57; Hunger, *Literatur*, I, pp. 478-80. For more specialised bibliography see: I. Hilberg, 'Die Versechronik des Ephraemios', *WSI* 10 (1888), pp. 50-92; O. Lampsides, 'De Vaticanus graecus 1003- Chronik des Ephraem', *Polychronion*, pp. 351-57; Idem, *Beiträge zum byzantinischen Chronisten Ephraem und seiner Chronik*, Athens 1972; Idem, *Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Αἰνίου Χρονογραφία. Κείμενο, μετάφραση, σχόλια*, 2 vols., Athens 1984/5.

Akropolites.⁴¹ More specifically, Ephraim follows Niketas consistently from the reign of John II Komnenos to the coronation of Henry of Flanders in August 1206 (4/84-642/75-76 of the Niketastext).

According to van Dieten, Ephraim was most certainly working from version b of the Niketastext. The additions made to the a-text are completely missing in Ephraim, while in cases of variant readings it is clear that Ephraim follows version b. However, van Dieten also observes that Ephraim appears to have used the last section of the a-text for his chronicle, and suggests that like the copyists M and C of the Niketastext, Ephraim was working from a manuscript that contained version b, but was added to from version a after the abrupt ending of b (614/7).⁴² The editor of Ephraim's chronicle, Odysseus Lampsides, expresses the same opinion with van Dieten.⁴³

It is undeniable that Ephraim was working from an exemplar of the b-text. This is evident, as van Dieten points out, not only from the omissions shared with b but also from the confirmation of readings between b and Ephraim (henceforth E): 53/59 θρόνων τῶν ἀρχικῶν: b ἐξ Ἀλαμανῶν ἀρχικῶν οὔσαν γένους: (E 4243) πάνυ λαμπρῶν (λαμπροῦ V): VAP; 168/79 ἐκ (δὲ b) γάμων τῶν δευτέρων: b(E 4335) ἤδη δὲ ὠδινούσης τῆς βασιλίδος: VAWP^{mg}; 274/ 12-13 ἐπεισπεσόντων αὐτῷ τινῶν: b ἐπεισπεσόντων τῷδὲ τινων: (E 5073) ἐπεισπεσόντων αὐτῷ τοῦ Ἀγιοχριστοφορίτου Στεφάνου, τοῦ Τριψύχου Κωνσταντίνου καὶ τινος Δαδιβρηνοῦ Θεοδώρου: VAPW 368/45 ἀγεται εἰς γυναῖκα: b ἡγάγεθ' οὗτος καὶ σύνευνον: (E 5779) μνηστεύεται εἰς γυναῖκα: VAPW; 399/43 αὔθις: b(E 5915) καὶ πάλιν: VAPW 419/92 ἐκ τῶν προτέρων αὐτῷ σπερμάτων: b ἐκ τῶν πρὶν εἶχεν αὐτοκράτωρ σπερμάτων: (E 6050) ἐκ τῶν προτέρων αὐτῷ γάμων: VAPW; 450/65 πρὸς σχάσιν φλεβὸς ἐτοιμασθῆναι σκηψάμενος: b σκηψάμενος δὲ τὴν φλεβὸς σχάσιν (E 6267) πρὸς σχάσιν φλεβὸς ἐτοιμασθῆναι λέγων, μαλακισμὸν ὑποκρινάμενος σώματος: APW; 537/34 Ἑλλησποντίαις πηγαῖς: bLO(E 6691) Ἑλλήσποντων Αὐλωνία: VAP; 612/43 τῆς βασιλείας οὐχ ἐκὼν ἀνταλλάττεται σύμβολα: b τὰ σύμβολ' ἀφήρητο τοῦ κράτους ἄκων: (E 7347) τῆς βασιλείας ἀνταλλάττεται σύμβολα: VP.

⁴¹ Lampsides, *Beiträge*, pp. 110-238, esp. 159-209 on Niketas.

⁴² van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, pp. LXXXIX-XCI.

⁴³ Lampsides, Introduction to the *Historia Chronica*, p. XLVI.

It is also undeniable that Ephraim had access to the final sections of the a-text, which he seems to have used, as his description of the death of Baldwin of Flanders indicates.⁴⁴ However, even for earlier sections of the text, contamination from version a is evidenced by a series of combination readings:

374/79-84 οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Ἀσάν ἐς τὴν Μυσίαν αὐθις ἐπανῆλθον μετὰ Σκυθῶν: b

οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Ἀσάν...καὶ τοῖς Σκύθαις συμμίξαντες...ἐς τὴν πατρίδα Μυσίαν ἐπανῆκον: APW

Ἀσάν δὲ Πέτρος σὺν Σκύθαις εἰς πατρίδα/αὐθις ἐπανέδραμον: (E 5835-36)

376/37 ὁ δὲ καὶ πάλαι μὲν ἐνήδρευε τῇ βασιλείᾳ: APWb

ἔρωτι δὲ βασιλείας ληφθεὶς: VW^a

ὅς δὴ τρέφων ἔρωτα πάλαι τοῦ στέφους: (E 5841)

441/9-14 ἦν δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν δίαιταν ὁ βασιλεὺς οὗτος πολυτελέστατος καὶ διαδοτικὸς βρωμάτων τοῖς παρεστῶσιν. εἶχεν οὖν ἀτεχνῶς τὴν τράπεζαν Σολομώντειον καὶ τὰς ἐσθῆτας ὡς ἐκεῖνος καινοφανεῖς περιέκειτο: b

ἐτρύφα καθ' ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς παρατιθέμενος τράπεζαν Συβαρίτιδα καὶ τῶν ἡδυτάτων χυμῶν γευόμενος...ναὶ μὴν ἑτερημέροις ἐνευπάθει λουτροῖς ὡσφραίνετό τε μυρεψομένων εὐωδιῶν καὶ ταῖς στακταῖς ἔρραντίζετο, ὡς ὁμοίωμά τε ναοῦ στολαῖς ἐξάλλοις ἐκέκαστο βοστρυχιζόμενος: a

πολυτελῆς δίαιταν ἐσθητᾶς ἅμα/ τράπεζαν αἰεὶ Σολομώντειον φέρων/ καὶ καινοφανεῖς τὰς στολὰς καθ' ἡμέραν: (E 5684-86)

462/38 βασιλεὺς ἀναγορευθεὶς: b βασιλεὺς αὐτοκράτωρ ἀναγορεύεται: VAP

βασιλεὺς αὐτοκράτωρ ἀναγορευθεὶς: (E 6385)

612/41 βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξιος: b φυγὰς βασιλεὺς: VP φυγὰς Ἀλέξιος: (E 7345)

On one occasion it is even clear that the readings of Ephraim agree with those of V against all other manuscripts: 399/48-49 οἶον τοὺς ἐς ἡμᾶς αὐτοκτάτορας οὐκ εἶων ἐπὶ μακρὸν θυραλεῖν, ἀλλ' ὡς ῥιψάσπιδας γινομένους ἔπειθον αὐτομολεῖν ἐς αὐτά: APWb τὸν Ἰσαάκιον, οὐκ εἶων ἐπὶ μακρὸν θυραλεῖν, ἀλλ' ὡς ῥιψάσπιδας γινόμενον ἔπειθον αὐτομολεῖν ἐς αὐτά: V μακρὸν θυραῖον τυγχάνειν οὐκ ἠφίει ἀλλὰ τρέχειν ἡπειγον αὐτὸν πρὸς τάδε: (E 5924-25).

⁴⁴ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XC.

This would suggest that Ephraim was working from a contaminated manuscript. This manuscript either contained interlinear and/or marginal notes with variant readings or the copyist of the original Niketastext could have made various combinations, which Ephraim subsequently followed. However, on the whole it is clear that Ephraim's exemplar contained the b-text and that contamination from version a is only evidenced to a minimal degree. There is also no reason to suspect that Ephraim had access to more than one exemplar, since the contamination from version a is so restricted.

To conclude, our three secondary textual witnesses, the paraphrase, Skoutariotes and Ephraim indicate that the three stages of composition of the Niketastext (b-LO-a) do not correspond to three distinct phases of 'publication' and dissemination of the text. Version b was certainly 'published' on its own and indeed enjoyed wide circulation as evidenced by the homogeneity and number of manuscripts (as well as copies of manuscripts) belonging to this family. The direct witnesses of this version (RMDF) further illustrate that the b-text continued to be copied in the fourteenth century, despite the fact that VAP (the witnesses of version a) are manuscripts belonging to the thirteenth century.⁴⁵ Of course, it is of equal importance that version b was used as an exemplar of the Niketastext by both Skoutariotes and Ephraim. It would thus appear that the majority of Niketas' readers in Byzantium were reading copies of the original text or, in any case, something close to it, rather than the version which we read today.

This is because version a never saw such a 'publication', nor does it seem to have enjoyed wide circulation. It is important to remember that the only direct witness of this version is manuscript V. In fact, our secondary witnesses indicate that the contaminated A and the 'intermediate' PW and other such 'hybrid' versions unknown to us enjoyed greater circulation than V. This was primarily due to three factors: 1) Niketas died before he had a chance to finish and 'publish' version a; 2) He did not create a new manuscript for this version; 3) The conditions of the dissemination and circulation of texts were such that subsequent readers and copyists created their own combination readings, which may have stemmed out of ignorance

⁴⁵ R (*Vat. gr.* 169) belongs to the thirteenth century, while D (*Vat. gr.* 168) has been dated to the thirteenth/fourteenth century. Both M (*Marc. gr.* 403) and F (*Vind. hist. gr.*) belong to the fourteenth century.

of which version was correct and/or their own selection process. Once version a left Niketas' hands this complex process of transmission was initiated.

Readership

In the preface to his *Historia*, Niketas makes the following statement: 'Even if history focuses on what is solemn and venerable, she nevertheless desires to be set before diggers and smiths and those covered in soot and to be a companion to those who pay reverence to arms and Ares, and not to be difficult for those women who spin for hire and explore that which pertains to her'.⁴⁶ This declaration is certainly connected to the ideal of the public utility (κοινωφέλες) of historical narratives that Niketas pledges to uphold⁴⁷ and therefore logically follows the passage where the author sets forth one of cardinal principles of his narration – clarity of diction. The modern reader finds that Niketas' writing is anything but clear and wonders whether Byzantine readers possibly shared this sentiment. The often-quoted marginal note found on fol. 2^v of ms. *Vindobonensis. hist. gr. 53* (=F): 'I do not know what you are saying here Choniates. You say that it is wise to write with clarity, but your writing is obscure and abysmal',⁴⁸ could be a significant indication that they did, were it not for the fact that although the manuscript is of the fourteenth century, this particular note is from a later hand.⁴⁹

More indicative of the possible difficulties that Niketas' contemporaries or near contemporaries had in understanding the original text is the fact that it was 'translated' into a simpler idiom, i.e. the paraphrase. It is also important to note that in certain passages where Niketas utilises rhetorical language packed with complex biblical and ancient allusions, the paraphrast is unable to reproduce the spirit or tone of the original, and it is questionable whether he understood it in the first place.⁵⁰ Much the same can be observed with Skoutariotes, who did not always interpret

⁴⁶ Nik.Chon., p. 3/51-55: κᾶν οὐ βραχὺ τὸ σεμνὸν ἡ ἱστορία καὶ τὸ αἰδέσιμον ἐπισύρηται, ἐρῶσα δ' ὅμως προκεῖσθαι σκαπανεῦσί τε καὶ σιδηρεῦσι καὶ πολλῆς γέμουσι τῆς ἀσβόλης καὶ συνήθης εἶναι τοῖς πρὸς ὄπλα καὶ Ἄρεα βλέπουσι, μηδὲ γυναιξὶ χερνήτισι δυσκολαίνουσα μεταλλευούσαις τὰ καθ' αὐτήν.

⁴⁷ R. Maisano, 'Il problema della forma letteraria nei proemi storiografici Bizantini', *BZ* 78 (1985), pp. 332-333.

⁴⁸ οὐκ οἶδα τί φῆς ἐνθάδε, Χωνειάτα, σοφὸν τὸ σαφὲς συγγράφων εἶναι λέγεις, εἴτα γρυφώδη καὶ βαρυσώδη γράφεις.

⁴⁹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. XXXII.

⁵⁰ Davis, 'A Passage of the 'Barbarograeca' Metaphrase', p. 141.

Niketas correctly.⁵¹ If Niketas' near contemporaries had difficulty in understanding the text, we may legitimately wonder who among his contemporaries could really comprehend his work.

It has been said that 'Byzantine society was throughout its existence a profoundly literate society'.⁵² The ability to read and write was not viewed as a professional necessity restricted to certain societal groups such as clerics or state functionaries. Indeed, literacy was appreciated and highly valued for its own sake by lay audiences for whom it was not a professional requirement.⁵³ Generally speaking, the most popular books in Byzantium were those of a theological content (hagiographies, homilies, commentaries on the Church Fathers). In the field of secular literature, chronicles, astrological texts, medicinal handbooks, books of oracles, and the like always held wide appeal for the reading public.⁵⁴ Of course, as in most societies there existed varying degrees of literacy in Byzantium and there is no doubt that texts written in the 'Atticist Hochsprache' were intended for a highly educated audience.⁵⁵

Niketas himself was educated in the stimulating literary environment of twelfth-century Constantinople under the tutelage of one of the most learned men of the age, his elder brother Michael.⁵⁶ He, like many writers of the time period which witnessed a revival of classical learning, produced works which spanned across different genres and included theology and panegyric as well as history. He delivered his accomplished orations (which were later published along with his correspondence) before an audience of court officials and dignitaries in the imperial courts of Constantinople and Nicaea and published an erudite theological treatise devoted to heresies, the *Panoplia Dogmatike*.

⁵¹ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. CIV, n. 10.

⁵² Browning, 'Further Reflections on Literacy', p. 81. For a discussion of the reading public in Byzantium see N. Wilson, 'Books and Readers in Byzantium', in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, C. Mango & I. Sevčenko (eds.), Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium 1971, Washington DC, 1975, pp. 1-15.

⁵³ Browning, 'Literacy', pp. 39-54; Idem, 'Further Reflections on Literacy', pp. 72-74.

⁵⁴ Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen*, p. 133.

⁵⁵ Browning, 'Literacy', p. 51

⁵⁶ For a positive evaluation of Byzantine literature in the twelfth century see A. Guillou, 'Le poids des conditions matérielles, sociales et économiques sur la production culturelle à Byzance de 1071 à 1261', *XVe congrès international d'études byzantines, Rapports et co-rapports*, II. 3, Bucharest 1971; H. Hunger, 'Die byzantinische Literatur der Komnenenzeit. Versuch einer Neubewertung' *Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 105 (1968), pp. 59-76; R. Browning, 'Church, State and Learning in Twelfth-century Byzantium', *Friends of Dr. Williams's Library, Thirty-fourth Lecture* 1980 (repr.) Idem, *History, Language and Literacy in the Byzantine World*, Variorum 1989, no. VI.

As a historian, Niketas no doubt belongs to the group of elite ‘classicizing’ Byzantine historians who continued each others’ work and wrote from within the confines of the imperial court. It is thus only logical to assume that his work, like that of his predecessors, was written for an audience made up mostly of government officials, intellectuals and the high orders of the clergy – the most educated segments of Byzantine society. The complex rhetorical language, the use of rare and archaising vocabulary and the multitude of allusions or similes drawn from ancient and biblical sources in the *Historia* would indicate that Niketas himself, despite his declaration to the contrary in the preface, aspired to be counted among this elite group.⁵⁷

Yet this observation seems to be true as far as the original draft of the *Historia* is concerned. At that time, the *logothetes ton sekreton*, Niketas was called upon to produce a history of the Komnenian emperors with all the constraints in language and content that task involved. When Niketas was composing the a-text, however, these constraints were lifted. He was no longer writing as a high-ranking official of the imperial court, but as a historian who attempted to provide an explanation for the disastrous events of 1204. Thus along with the overt criticism of the most powerful segments (and families) of Byzantine society offered in the a-text, we can also observe a greatest interest in banal anecdotes and the use of cruder expressions on the part of Niketas.⁵⁸ This freedom of expression would then suggest that the a-text was not composed for a limited group of courtiers or intellectuals and that Niketas himself had a wider audience in mind. Indeed, his ambition was not merely to be counted among the elite historians of Byzantium – it was greater than that. Niketas wished to be known to posterity as the historian who recorded the most important event in Byzantine history; in a sense, we can say that he wanted to become the Thucydides of Byzantium.

Concerning his audience, we had earlier noted that in contrast to the pattern of transmission followed by historians and chroniclers in the twelfth century, the thirteenth century presents us with a situation where the historians Niketas and Akropolites enjoyed wider circulation and thus popularity than the chroniclers Skoutariotes and Ephraim. It is not difficult to see why the works of Niketas and Akropolites display such a rich and varied manuscript tradition and also why they enjoyed wide circulation. The difference between previous historians and Niketas and

⁵⁷ Maisano, ‘Varianti d’ autore’, p. 78.

Akropolites lies primarily in the significance of their subject matter. The climax of Niketas' *Historia* is, of course, the fall of the imperial city in 1204 and the disintegration of the empire thereafter, while Akropolites is the historian who narrated the events of the triumphant recapture of Constantinople by the Byzantines in 1261 and the restoration of the empire. Again, Skoutariotes and Ephraim, who merely reproduced the accounts of these two historians, were not nearly as popular as Niketas and Akropolites.

It is probably true to say that Niketas presented difficulties for those readers who had not received the highest education available in Byzantium, but that does not necessarily mean that they could not understand him at all. After all, Skoutariotes, Niketas' paraphrast, Ephraim, and others who used Niketas as a source but wrote in a simpler idiom certainly did. Why then should we not assume that moderately educated Byzantine readers could also understand Niketas' text? The manuscript tradition of the *Historia* suggests that the text was popular with Byzantine audiences, but this cannot be reconciled with the assumption of a limited audience restricted to court officials, the clergy and intellectuals. This is because the *Historia* was not limited to such an audience. The text was, no doubt, difficult to understand, but Byzantine audiences nevertheless attempted to reap knowledge from the words of Niketas. Its 'translation' into a simpler idiom for those who could not come to grips with the original indicates that the historical significance of the text meant that it should become available to an even wider audience.⁵⁹ The *Historia* was a text that belonged to the entirety of the Byzantine people – not the limited few.

Traumatic events often awaken the historical consciousness of a people. It is no accident of transmission that preserves the *Historia* of Niketas in so many manuscripts. His historical work was not only frequently copied and widely read, but also received generous praise by later generations. The author of an anonymous chronicle of the period 1204-1261, who used Niketas as a source, wrote the following verse in the year 1391: 'For such evil deeds that were then carried out unlawfully by the savage western Latins, view especially the book of Niketas Choniates and you will witness all those things which pertain to lamentation and more. Choniates was present during the capture of the city and saw with his own eyes those evil events. As

⁵⁸ van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. LVII, n. 5.

⁵⁹ See introductory remarks of Hans-Georg Beck concerning the historical self-awareness of the Byzantines in the later Byzantine period: *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur*, p. 6.

a lover of truth, he nobly recorded everything.’⁶⁰ It would thus seem that Niketas’ ambition was fulfilled and in our times he is still known, albeit to an extremely limited audience of Byzantine scholars, as the Thucydides of Byzantium.

⁶⁰ J. Müller, *Byzantinische Analekten aus der S. Markus-Bibliothek zu Venedig und der K.K. Hofbibliothek zu Wien*, Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historische Klasse der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 9 (1952), p. 336: ὅποῖα γοῦν εἰργάσαντο τότε κακὰ τῇ πόλει οἱ θηριώδες δυτικοὶ Λατῖνοι παρανόμως, ἰδὲ τὴν βίβλον ἀκριβῶς Νικήτα Χωνιάτου, καὶ βλέψεις θρήνων ἅπαντα καὶ θρήνου τι τὰ πλείω. ἔτυχε πρὸς τὴν ἄλωσιν οὗτος ὁ Χωνιάτης ἰδὼν οἰκείοις ὀφθαλμοῖς κακὰ τὰ γεγονότα, καὶ πάντα συνεγράψατο καλῶς ὡς φιλαλήθης. See also van Dieten, Introduction to the *Historia*, p. VII, and n. 2 (on marginal notes of this type).

CONCLUSION

‘In another age, in another place, Nicetas Choniates would truly have been a man to be envied’, wrote Alexander Kazhdan in one of his studies on Byzantine literature.¹ A once wealthy, successful and respected statesman, Niketas lost his home, his city, his livelihood and his pride in the dark days of 1204 and ended his life in poverty and obscurity. If Niketas’ own life was fraught with tragedy, this is equally true for the historical work he produced. The *Historia*, written so as to commemorate the greatness and decadence of Byzantium in the twelfth century, is less of an exact depiction of past reality, and more of a mirror of Niketas’ attitude to the age in which he lived. This observation is true for the final version of the work, which Niketas composed with the benefit of hindsight and with the explicit purpose of explaining the causes of the calamity of 1204. It is not, however, true for the original version of the history, for in this instance, Niketas’ representation of the past was dictated by the absence of political freedom and professional independence. The result, as we have clearly seen, can more or less be accurately described as a carefully-worked piece of Komnenian propaganda.

When assessing the two different versions, it is imperative to understand the reasons for the discrepancies between them. These reasons are found in the circumstances of the author at each distinctive phase of the composition and in the different purposes of his respective undertakings. Thus simply accepting one version and discarding the other will not suffice, for it is incumbent on the modern scholar to interpret the historical data in both versions of the text and come to terms with the two opposing representations of Byzantium in the twelfth century. Striking a balance between the praise of the b-text and the invective of the a-text will, no doubt, lead to a better understanding of the crucial time period as seen both before and after 1204. Indeed, when following this approach we can better appreciate the complete dominance of the Komnenoi in Byzantine society prior to 1204, the initial reception and changing views on the controversial policies of Manuel Komnenos, the awkward reactions to the bloody reign of the usurper Andronikos, the enigma of the Angeloi, Byzantine attitudes towards the Latins and for that matter all other foreigners, as well as the numbing response to western aggression in 1203-04.

¹ A. P. Kazhdan & S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries*, Cambridge 1984 p. 256.

Thus a new reading of the *Historia* can assist greatly in what has now become a much-needed reassessment of the period 1180-1204 – a subject still dominated by Charles Brand's *Byzantium Confronts the West (1180-1204)*. In turn, the reception of Niketas' text after 1204 can also help us to understand how Byzantine society reacted to the fall of Constantinople and the partitioning of the empire thereafter. Here again, the two different versions play a vital role, for as we have seen, the original version of the text had a much greater audience than the later one. Yet one need only consider the fortunes and vicissitudes of Niketas' text in comparison to the work of other Byzantine historians to catch a glimpse of its importance.

A similar approach should be followed when we consider Niketas Choniates as a historian. Here the aim should not be assessment, but understanding, and the modern reader must always be aware of the vast gulf that separates our own sense of preserving the past from that of Niketas. Narrative practices such as conversations from the imagined point of view of the characters, description of motives, story telling and the supply of vivid details may have come naturally to Niketas, but for us, they are immediately suspect. The same is true for the subtle manipulation of sources and the subordination of factual accuracy to purpose and style – a principle often followed by Niketas. Moreover, the selection of narrative episodes, the pacing and structuring of the text, as well as its literary presentation reflect Niketas' own interests, values and gifts as a narrator. The *Historia* is essentially, Byzantium as seen through the eyes of Niketas Choniates. This does not, of course, mean that the *Historia* is not an authoritative source of past events; it means that like all other sources, it should be read critically.

Any discussion of Niketas as a historian inevitably involves historical causation and argumentation. There is no need to draw a distinct line of separation between the role and function of divine providence and free will in Niketas' narrative. Niketas himself did not attempt to do such a thing, but rather followed the principle of joint operation. It is equally fruitless to assign separate functions to ancient and Christian notions of causation and argumentation. If we deny Niketas his place within the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition, then we should also assume that he wrote within a vacuum of time and that he was completely uninfluenced by the great masters of antiquity, which he diligently cites and pays tribute to. The unresolved

conflict between ancient and Christian ideas is one of our own making. Niketas had no problem with the simultaneous function of God and Fate in human affairs.

It is only fitting that the final remarks should be given to the author of the *Historia*, for it is to his remarkable endeavour that we owe our knowledge of past events. Writing in the aftermath of 1204, the disillusioned Niketas cries out: 'As the wretched author that I am, to be the keeper of such evils, I grace the written word with such misfortunes that befell my family and countrymen. For who could utterly bear to see such trophies erected by the enemy? In olden times, the victors in battle, thinking humanely and choosing not to maintain hatreds forever, erected trophies of wood and small stones so that they would be preserved only but a short while, for they were not memorials of friendship, but of the embers of hatred and the shedding of blood. Nowadays, the barbarians to whom we have been given over by God for chastisement have invented the razing of cities to the ground and total destruction as evidence of their victories.'² Time may have subsequently erased all traces of the destruction and human suffering of those days, but these events are engrained in our memory by the pen of Niketas Choniates.

² Nik.Chon., pp. 634/86-635/95: ὡς δυστυχῆς ἐγὼ συγγραφεὺς οἷοις κακοῖς ἐταμιευόμην, οἷοις ἐμοῖς τε καὶ τῶν φυλετῶν δυσπραγίᾳσι τὸν λόγον χαρίζομαι. τίς γὰρ ἂν καὶ σχοίη ὅλως ὑπενεγκεῖν τοιαῦτα θεώμενος τρόπαια πρὸς τῶν πολεμίων ἀνεγειρόμενα; οἱ μὲν γὰρ πάλαι ταῖς μάχαις κρατοῦντες ἀνθρώπινα φρονοῦντες, οὐδ' ἀθάνατα τὰ μίσση τηρεῖν δοκιμάζοντες, διὰ ξύλων καὶ βραχέων λίθων ἀνίστων τὰ τρόπαια, ὅπως ὀλίγον χρόνον διαμεμενηκότα παρέρχηται, ὡς μηδὲ φιλίας ὑπομνήματα ὄντα, ἀλλ' ἔχθρας καὶ προχύσεως αἱμάτων ἐμπυρεύματα. νυνὶ δὲ πόλεων κατασκαφαὶ καὶ τοῦ παντὸς ἀφανίσσεις δείγματα τῆς νίκης πρὸς τῶν βαρβάρων ἐξεύρηται, οἷς θεόθεν εἰς μαστίγωσιν ἐκδεδόμεθα.

APPENDIX I
LIST OF INDIVIDUALS ENCOMPASSED IN THE REVISION OF THE
HISTORIA

NAME OFFICE/TITLE	REVISED PASSAGES
Alexios III Angelos Emperor (1195-1203)	422/67-73, 447/91-92, 448/8-9, 450/59-61, 450/67-70, 453/3-21, 454/21ff, 456/95, 457/95-20, 459/54-461/14, 461/14-463/78, 464/14-17, 465/18-23, 465/30-467/90, 471/91-12, 472/20-473/64-475/25, 477/67ff, 482/21-483/33, 483/35-493/66, 493/67ff, 503/36-40, 504/75-82, 507/42ff, 510/45ff, 513/31-514/36. 518/10-18, 518/22-519/33, 521/1-522/24, 528/76-532/20, 533/42-62 534/73-535/2, 537/54-55, 540/29-37, 544/9-12, 545/50-546/59, 546/65-68, 547/72-547/80, 548/94-1, 556/80-81, 612/41-45
Andronikos I Komnenos Emperor (1183-1185)	101/68-69, 103/9-18, 259/37-38, 260/49-50, 272/67-69, 272/78-79, 273/85-89, 273/90ff, 276/20-24, 283/23-24, 292/69-71, 320/77-322/55, 338/3-339/9, 339/20-22
Angelos Doukas John <i>Sebastokrator</i>	374/84-95, 498/16-22
Apotyras John Judge of the velum	341/56-57
Aspietes Alexios Governor of Serrai	465/23-29
Bestralites Imperial bodyguard	486/42-53
Branas Alexios Military commander	376/28-36, 376/37-377/51
Branas Theodore Military commander	451/70-75

NAME OFFICE/TITLE	REVISED PASSAGES
Chrysos Drobomir Vlach military commander	487/61-75, 507/42ff, 533/42-62, 534/73-535/2
Dadibrenos Theodore Commander of the <i>Ravdophoroi</i>	274/13-14
Doukas Andronikos	292/80-81, 293/83-88
Doukas Andronikos Military commander	496/54-73
Dositheos Patriarch of Constantinople (1189)	404/94-1, 405/14ff, 408/87-90, 432/78-433/88
Eirenikos Theodore <i>Epi tou kanikleiou</i> (Patriarch 1212/14-1215/16)	492/51-493/62
Euphrosyne Kamatere Empress (1195-1203)	460/78-461/13, 484/76-486/55, 487/77-489/46, 519/44-520/69
Frangopoulos Constantine Naval commander	528/81-529/7
Hagiochristophorites Stephanos <i>Logothetes tou dromou</i>	274/13-14
Henry VI Emperor of Germany (1190-97)	475/38-42, 476/57-59, 480/54ff.
Ionopolites John <i>Parakoimomenos</i>	461/26-28
Isaakios II Angelos Emperor (1185-1195)	373/74-78, 404/94-1, 404/7-13, 406/37-38, 408/87-90, 432/78-433/88, 440/81-5, 441/18-442/32, 442/38-47, 443/59-444/10, 452/95-1, 536/22-23, 555/65-69
Ivanko-Alexios Vlach military commander	512/89-4, 513/15-21, 513/24-27
John (Vatatzes?) <i>Protovestiarios</i>	507/42-52

NAME OFFICE/TITLE	REVISED PASSAGES
Kamateros Gregory <i>Logothetes ton sekreton</i>	9/16-22
Kamateros Basil <i>Logothetes tou dromou</i>	485/4-486/42, 488/21-489/30
Kamateros Basil Patriarch of Constantinople (1183-86)	262/1-6, 276/20-24
Kamateros John <i>Logothetes tou dromou</i>	11/134, 112/63, 113/88, 113/93-95, 114/29-115/40
Kamateros John <i>Epi tou kanikleiou</i> , Metropolitan of Bulgaria	274/25-29
Kamytzes Manuel <i>Protostrator</i>	498/16-22, 513-8-9, 533/42-62
Kantakouzenos John Ceasar	374/1-376/26
Kantakouzenos Manuel Military commander	451/70-75
Katalon Andronikos Military commander	474/94-475/9
Kazanes Theodore Military commander	474/94-475/9
Komnenos Alexios <i>Sebastokrator</i>	231/13-14, 425/70-71, 425/75-76, 427/25-41
Komnenos Alexios <i>Protosebastos</i> and <i>protovestiaros</i>	224/34-35, 225/44-45, 229/68-69, 230/1-2, 232/45-46, 242/16-18, 244/48- 59, 249/87, 250/10ff
Komnenos Andronikos Governor of Thessaloniki	425/57-68
Komnenos Doukas Michael Ruler of Epiros (1204-1215)	529/18-24

NAME OFFICE/TITLE	REVISED PASSAGES
Komnenos Isaakios	423/8-13
Komnenos unidentified	423/18-20
Komnenos unidentified	428/51-62
Kontostephanos Andronikos	485/4-486/42, 488/21-489/30
Lagos John Commander of the Praetorian prison	524/84-526/33
Manuel I Komnenos Emperor (1143-1180)	54/70-74, 60/37-38, 60/39-40, 95/29, 103/9-18, 104/29-36, 143/43-47, 144/72, 144/77-83, 154/43-55, 168/79- 169/87, 203/75- 206/74, 206/50-56, 427/25-41
Maria-Xene Empress (1161-1182)	224/33-35, 225/44, 230/1-2
Mesopotamites Constantine <i>Epi tou Kanikleiou</i>	439/70-72, 440/81-85, 440/85-441/9, 484/76-485/3, 489/47-492/50
Oinaiotes George Chamberlain	503/49-504/70, 511/51-54
Palaiologos Alexios, <i>Despotes</i> , military commander	508/79-81, 526/24, 530/66
Palaiologos George Military commander	451/70-75, 512/81-82
Petraliphas John Military commander	451/70-75, 570/38
Philokales Eumathios Eparch	478/3-11
Pseudo-Alexios	461/14-463/78
Poutzes John <i>Pronotarios tou dromou, megas logariastes</i>	56/33-38, 57/53-58/82
Raoul Constantine Military commander	451/70-75

NAME OFFICE/TITLE	REVISED PASSAGES
Roman Prince of Calicia	523/43-49
Rurik Prince of Kiev	523/43-49
Sgouros Gabriel Ruler of Nauplion	611/26-35
Sgouros Leo <i>Archon</i> of Argolidokorinthia	611/25ff.
Spyridonakes John Governor of Smolena	534/73-535/2
Steiriones John Naval commander	482/8ff
Stephen I Nemanja Grand zupan of Serbia (1196-1227/28)	531/72-532/14
Stryphnos Michael <i>Megas dux</i>	482/24-25, 491/19-24, 541/41
Tatikios Constantine <i>Sebastos</i>	423/14-17
Theodore I Laskaris Emperor (1205-1222)	508/81-82, 544/19, 546/65, 602/90ff, 631/16ff, 635/7ff
Tornikes Constantine Eparch, <i>logothetes tou dromou</i>	525/16-18
Tripsychos Constantine <i>Hetairiarches</i>	274/13-14
Vatatzes unidentified Military commander	486/42-55
Vukan Nemanja Stephen I Nemanja's brother	532/10-14

APPENDIX II

THE REVISION OF THE *HISTORIA*¹

RMDF=b; VA=a; PW; LO

1/1-3 Title: τοῦ λογοθέτου τῶν σεκρέτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κρίσεων, γεγονότος δὲ καὶ ἐφόρου καὶ κριτοῦ τοῦ βήλου, γενικοῦ καὶ προκαθημένου τοῦ κοιτῶνος Νικήτα τοῦ Χωνιάτου ἱστορία ἀρχομένη ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ βασιλέως κῦρ Ἰωάννου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ, τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ βασιλέως κῦρ Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ: b χρονικὴ διήγησις τοῦ Χωνειάτου κῦρ Νικήτα ἀρχομένη ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας Ἰωάννου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ καὶ λήγουσα μέχρι τῆς ἀλώσεως τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως: V

Book I: John II Komnenos (1118-1143)

9/16-17 ὦ Καματηρὸς ἡ ἐπὶ κλησις: om. b; 17-18 μὲν τὸ δὲ γένος οὐκ ἀριπρεπὴς οὐδ' ἐπίπαν εὐπάφυρος: om. b; 19-22 καὶ κατὰ κῆδος αὐτῶ συναφθεῖς ὡς μιᾷ τῶν ἐκείνου συγγενῶν προσπλακεῖς: b τὰς ἐπαρχίας ἀμφεποτᾶτο καὶ τοῦ τάσσειν φόρους ταύταις πλοῦτον τιθαιβώσων βαθύν ἡράσθη κατὰ κῆδος βασιλεῖ συναφθῆναι. οὐκοῦν καὶ προσπλακεῖς μιᾷ τῶν αὐτοῦ συγγενῶν: VAP Gregory Kamateros, *logothetes ton sekreton* accumulates great wealth through the taxation of the provinces and weds one of John Komnenos' kinswomen.

Books II-VIII: Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)

54/70-74 καὶ...ἐξανθήματα: om. APb Manuel Komnenos has an illicit sexual affair with one of his kinswomen and is disfigured as a result of the impropriety.

¹ In noting Niketas' work of revision I have followed van Dieten in keeping to the pages and lines of the main text (=a) and recording the variant readings, omissions and additions mainly of version b, but where significant, of other manuscripts as well. In the case of variant readings, I have often supplied both versions in order to show the differences between them. I have not, however, taken into consideration readings that display variations in vocabulary, style, grammatical structure, or insignificant alteration in meaning. The following list then indicates alterations and additions with regard to the content of the narration and does not in any way attempt to record the revisions in full.

56/33-38 οὐκοῦν...κατεσκέπτετο: om. Pb John Poutzes, *prnotarios tou dromou* and *megas logariastes* accumulates great wealth unlawfully.

57/53-58/82 ἄλλοτε...χρώμασιν: om. APb Anecdote concerning the niggardly character of John Poutzes.

60/37-38 ἀλλ' ὥς κληρωτοῖς θεραποῦσι: om. b Manuel Komnenos treats his ministers as slaves.

60/39-40 ἵνα μὴ λέγοιμι ὥς εἰς τὸ παλίρρουν αὐτὴν ἐβιάσατο καὶ τὸν ἀναδασμὸν ἔστιν ὅτε καὶ ἐφ' οἷς ἐδικαίωσεν: om. b Manuel Komnenos instigates a harsh financial policy.

72/82-84 αἱ πάλαι μὲν Ῥωμαίοις ὑπέκειντο, νυνὶ δὲ ἀνεῖνται βαρβάροις καὶ δορύκτητοι παρ' αὐτῶν καρπίζονται μαλακία πάντως καὶ οἰκουρία τῶν τὰ Ῥωμαίων (πρὸ πολλοῦ om. V) διεπόντων πράγματα: VAPWb The loss of Byzantine territories in the East.

95/29 ἐπεὶ δὲ σχεδὸν ἅπασι δοκεῖ τοῖς μέγα δυναμένοις πάλαι καὶ σήμερον: b; ἐπεὶ δὲ φασὶ πολλοὶ: AW; ἐπεὶ δὲ τισι δοκεῖ τῶν πάλαι καὶ σήμερον: A^{mg} PW^{mg}; δοξάζων δ' ὁ Μανουήλ οὐκ ἐπαινετῶς: V The belief of Manuel Komnenos in astrology.

96/33-49 τῆς...ἀσφάλεια: ἀπακριβοῦται τῷ Ἀγγέλῳ ἡ ἐξοδος, ὥς οἱ τῶν ἀστέρων ἀγαθοὶ σχηματισμοὶ ἐνεδίδοσαν. οὐδ' ὅλως δὲ ἡ ἀσφάλεια τῶν τῆς ἀστρονομουμένης σφαίρας κανόνων τὰ Ῥωμαίων ὤνησε πράγματα: Wb Longer, more detailed and more critical exposition of Constantine Angelos' expedition to Sicily (1154) in VAP.

103/9-18 οὐδὲν...μάλιστα: om. b The attributes of Andronikos Komnenos arouse suspicion in Manuel Komnenos.

104/29-36 καὶ...συγκατέκειτο: om. Wb Andronikos Komnenos defends himself against the accusations of incest leveled against him by pointing to Manuel Komnenos' own incestuous affair.

113/93-95 ἀνθρώπων...παρενεσάλευε: om. Wb Reference to the malicious character of John Kamateros, *logothetes tou dromou*.

114/29-115/40 ἦττων...καθείλκετο: om. Wb Anecdotal information concerning the character of John Kamateros, *logothetes tou dromou*.

143/43-47 περιδεεῖς οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν κρατούντων καὶ καχύποπτοι, καὶ χαίρουσι διαπραττόμενοι ὅσα: APWb περιδεῆς ἅπας κρατῶν καὶ καχύποπτος καὶ χαίρει διαπραττόμενος ὅσα: V; 51-54 κἄν εἴη τις τὸ κάλλος ἀγαλματίας καὶ τὴν γλῶτταν ὡς ὄρνις μουσηγέτης ἐστόμωται, κἄν τὸ ἦθος ὁρῶτο εὐτράπελος, οὐκ ἐᾷ καθεύδειν τὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ στέφους οὐδ' ἡρεμεῖν, ἀλλὰ γίνεται τούτῳ τῶν ὑπνῶν ἐγκοπή, τῆς τρυφῆς ἀνατροπή, ἡδονῆς ὑφαίρεσις, φροντίδων ὑπόθεσις: om.Wb; 57-64 οὐκοῦν καὶ ἀντιστρατεύονται τὰ πολλὰ τῇ προνοίᾳ καὶ τῷ θεῷ ὑπέροπλοι γίνονται, πάντα ἀγαθὸν ἐκ τοῦ πλείονος ἐκχορδεύοντες καὶ ὡς θύματα σφαγιάζοντες, ὡς ἔχοιεν ἐφ' ἡσυχίας δῆπουθεν οὗτοι σπαθαῖν καὶ ὡς πατρῶον κληρὸν καθηδύπαθεῖν μονώτατοι τὰ δημόσια καὶ ὡς ἀνδραπόδοις χρᾶσθαι τοῖς ἐλευθέροις καὶ ὡς ὠνητοῖς τοῖς ἀξιωτέροις ἐνίστε ἄρχειν προσφέρεσθαι, κακῶς εἰδότες καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν ὑπὸ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἀφηρημένοι καὶ κακοβούλως τῶν πρότριά λαυθανόμενοι: om. Wb This passage can be seen as a prelude to the discussion of the alleged conspiracy hatched by Alexios Axouch, the *protostrator*, against Manuel Komnenos. Niketas is critical of the abuse of power by rulers, but as we can see his harshest remarks are reserved for version a.

144/72 ἴσως δὲ καὶ τοῦ προσόντος αὐτῷ πλούτου ὑποτύφων ἔφεσιν: om. Wb 77-83 ἵνα...Ἕλληνες: om. Wb In these references Niketas alleges that Manuel Komnenos may have coveted the wealth of the *protostrator* Alexios Axouch and that he induced certain of his men to falsely accuse Axouch of witchcraft.

154/43-55 οὕτω...ἀποφάσεσιν: om. b The *megas doux*, Andronikos Kontostephanos receives a letter from Manuel Komnenos (8 July, 1167) ordering him to put off the

military engagement with the Hungarians because the stars were not in a favourable position. Kontostephanos conceals the letter and ignores the emperor's command.

168/79-169/87 ἤδη...διάδοχον: ἐκ δὲ γάμων τῶν δευτέρων τοῦ βασιλέως τοῦδε παῖδα γειναμένου ἄρρενα θεῶ τε φωναὶ ἀπεδίδοντο χαριστήριοι καὶ ἅπας ἦν ἐν κρότοις καὶ χαρμοναῖς: b The birth of Alexios II Komnenos (1169). The account of version a is longer and more detailed.

203/75-206/47 ὅτι....βασίλεια: om. Wb This section forms the longest addition made to the discussion of the reign of Manuel Komnenos. It begins with a defense of the foreign policy of Manuel Komnenos, but quickly turns to criticism. Among the charges leveled against the emperor are that he increased taxation and wasted the revenues of the state on useless endowments to monasteries and the Latin communities. Manuel's mistress, Theodora, along with the illegitimate children that she bore, as well as the emperor's relatives and close fiends received vast amounts from the public treasury. Moreover, the emperor depended heavily on eunuchs and foreign attendants, whom he appointed to the highest offices in the administration. Manuel chose to appoint foreign tax officials to the provinces in order to put an end to the corruption of the native Byzantine officials. Finally, Niketas tells us that Manuel constructed towers so as to strengthen the defenses of the city.

206/50-52 οἷ...διεσκευάζει: om.Wb Manuel Komnenos decorated his palaces with gold mosaics depicting his struggles against the barbarians; 52-56 ἀλλὰ...πλείονα: VAP He further erected splendid buildings along the Propontis where the emperors could spend the summer seasons.

Book IX: Alexios II Komnenos (1180-1183)

224/34-35 τὴν τοῦ παιδὸς καὶ βασιλέως μητέρα ὑποποιησαμένου: APWb τῇ τοῦ παιδὸς καὶ βασιλέως μητρὶ πλησιάζοντος: V The relationship of Alexios Komnenos, *protosebastos* and *protovestiarios*, with the empress Maria-Xene.

225/42-46 ἤδη γὰρ ἡ φήμη λόλος ἦν καὶ διαρρήδην κραυγαύζουσα ὡς Ἀλέξιος τῇ μητρὶ τοῦ βασιλέως ξύμφυτος μικροῦ καὶ σύμπνους γενόμενος

καὶ καθελεῖν αὐτὸν τῆς βασιλείας ἐν νῶ τίθεται, ἐαυτὸν δ' ἐπιβήτορα ταύτης, θέσθαι σκέπτεται: b ἤδη γὰρ ἡ φήμη λάλος ἦν καὶ διαρρήδην κραυγαύζουσα ὡς Ἀλέξιος τῇ μητρὶ τοῦ βασιλέως συγγίνεται καὶ καθελεῖν μὲν τοῦτον τῆς δυναστείας ἐν νῶ τίθεται, ἐαυτὸν δ' ἐπιβήτορα ταύτης, ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ τῆς τεκούσης γενήσεσθαι σκέπτεται: V The plans of the *protosebastos* Alexios to usurp the throne.

225/47 καὶ οὕτω μὲν τὰ κατὰ τὴν βασίλειον αὐλὴν πάσης ὄντα συγχύσεως: b καὶ οὕτω μὲν τὰ κατὰ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτὴν πάσης ὄντα συγχύσεως: VAPW Here Niketas conducts a significant alteration. In version b, affairs in the palace are in a state of turmoil, while in a, affairs during the reign of Alexios II are in such a state.

229/68-69 ὁ δὲ πρωτοσεβαστὸς Ἀλέξιος τῷ ἰδίῳ φυσιούμενος κράτει καὶ τῇ παραδυναστεία τῆς δεσποίνης καταχρώμενος διαστασιάζοντας εἶχε τῶν ἐξ αἵματος ἐκείνῳ πλείστους καὶ μάλισθ' ὅτι τὴν τῶν ὅλων διοίκησιν ἐς ἐαυτὸν ἐβιάζετο: b ὁ δὲ πρωτοσεβαστὸς Ἀλέξιος ἐκπάγλως ἐμαίνετο, τῷ ἰδίῳ πισύνος κράτει καὶ τῇ παραδυναστεία τῆς δεσποίνης καταχρώμενος, ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ πολλὰ πολλάκις ἐκδηδοκῶς φάρμακα δράκων καὶ γενόμενος δυσαντίβλεπτος: VAPW Niketas takes a harsher stance towards Alexios the *ptotosebastos* in the revision.

232/45-46 κατολισθαίνειν εἰς πράξεις μηδαμῇ θεμιτάς: b κατολισθαίνειν εἰς πράξιν ἀθέμιτον καὶ τὸ γένος οἱ ἐντεῦθεν ἐπιθολοῦν: V A clear allusion to the sexual affair between Maria-Xene and Alexios Komnenos is found in V.

242/16-18 οὐκοῦν: Wb ἄκων οὖν ὁ σκολιὸς ὄφιν τῶν ἐλίξεων ἀποστὰς καὶ τὸν ἰὸν αὖθις κατεσπακῶς, ὃν ὁ ἐμημεκέναι κατὰ τοῦ ἀγίου προητοιμάκει: VAP^{mg} Once again Niketas uses harsh words against Alexios the *protosebastos*.

244/48-59 ἀλλὰ: Wb καίτοι...ὑπόνωθρος: VAP^{mg} Niketas attacks the character of Alexios the *protosebastos*, accusing him of effeminacy, weakness, deceitfulness, and so on.

249/87 πολὺς τὸ γένος καὶ τὴν τύχην ὑπέραυχος: APWb θρασὺς καὶ αὐθάδης καὶ λίαν ὑπέραυχος: V Two different descriptions of Alexios the *protosebastos*.

250/10-14 εἶχε μὲν οὖν τὰς χεῖρας εἰς παράταξιν ἱκανὰς καὶ τοὺς δακτύλους πρὸς πόλεμον ἐδεδίδακτο· ἴσως δ' ἄν καὶ πλείονι πολέμου παρασκευῇ καὶ ὁρμῇ ὀξυτέρα χρησάμενος τῷ τε Ἀνδρονίκῳ τὴν ἐς τὴν πόλιν πάροδον ἀπετείχισε καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀπείρατον διεφύλαξε τοῦ ἐφεστῶτος κακοῦ: b εἶχε δ' ἄν, εἰ τὰς χεῖρας πρὸς παράταξιν ὥπλιστο καὶ τοὺς δακτύλους πρὸς πόλεμον ἐδεδίδακτο καὶ μὴ ἦν μαλθακὸς αἰχμητῆς καὶ βάτταλος καὶ τῆς ἡμέρας ῥέγκων τὸ ὑπερήμισυ τῷ τε Ἀνδρονίκῳ...:V The reaction of Alexios the *protosebastos* to the rebellion of Andronikos Komnenos.

259/37-38 ἡμερῶν δὲ τινων διαλειπουσῶν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γίνεται ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως Μανουήλ θυγάτηρ Μαρία ἡ καισάρισσα φαρμάκῳ διαφθαρεῖσα, ὡς ἦδετο εἶναι...: b ὁ δ' αὐτὸς φαρμακὸς ὢν ὀλωτάτος ἐλελήθει πρότερον, ἡνίκα τυραννεῖν ἐπεβάλετο· ἡμερῶν δὲ τινων διαλειπουσῶν ἦδετο παρὰ πάσι καὶ θανασίμους κεραννύειν ἐπίστασθαι κύλικας καὶ τῆς ὀλεθρίας ταύτης ἐς ἄδου καταγωγῆς πρώτην πειραθῆναι τὴν καισάρισσαν Μαρίαν τὴν θυγατέρα τοῦ βασιλέως Μανουήλ...: VAPW The murder of Manuel Komnenos' daughter, Maria the *kaisarissa* by Andronikos I Komnenos related in version a.

260/49-50 καπὶ τούτῳ ἀνδροφόνος ἐθρυλλεῖτο παρὰ πάντων Ἀνδρόνικος: om. b Andronikos murders the ceasar Renier of Montferrat.

262/1-6 ἦ...Ἀνδρόνικον: om. b Andronikos I Komnenos appoints his supporter, Basil Kamateros as patriarch of Constantinople.

272/67-69 ἦν...ἀγριότητα: om. b Niketas discusses the savageness of Andronikos Komnenos; 78-79 ὄν...παρέπεμψεν: om. b Forward reference to the murder of Alexios II Komnenos.

273/85-89 ἦν...γαστρὸς: om. Wb Anecdote ridiculing Andronikos' old age; 90-91 ἄσας τὰ ἀναγορευτήρια ἐφ' ἕτερα τρέπει τὸν νοῦν: b θύσας ἐφ' ἱκαναῖς

ἡμέρας τὰ ἀναγορευτήρια ἐφ' ἕτερα τρέπει τὸν νοῦν παρανομίας γέμοντα ἔργα: VA On the unlawfull deeds of Andronikos.

273/93-94 ἐκποδὼν γὰρ θέσθαι τὸν βασιλέα βουλευθεὶς Ἀλέξιον τὴν φίλιον καὶ πάλιν ἀρθροῖζει πνύκα (καὶ τὴν ἑταιρείαν συναγείρει τὴν ἐκείνῳ συνοργιάζουσιν τὰ μὴ ὅσια om. b) bVAPW Andronikos gathers together his partisans to vote for a resolution to dispose of Alexios II; 4-7 ταῦτα δὴ τὰ χθές τε καὶ πρόην ἐπὶ πολυανθρώπων συνελεύσεων πραβαλλόμενα: b ταῦτα δὴ τὰ χθές τε καὶ πρόην λαρυγγιζόμενα καὶ τοῖς ἐρωτῶσι τὴν αἰτίαν τῶν γινομένων εἰς ἀπολογίαν προκείμενα, εἴ τις τέως παροικῶν ἀτεχνῶς ἐν λαμπροτάτῃ πόλει τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου οὐκ ἦν εἰδὼς τὰ γινόμενα καὶ τὸν λόγον ὅλως ἡγνοηκώς δι' ὃν ἐπεραίνοντο: V The publication of the decision to depose Alexios II.

274/12-14 καὶ νυκτὸς ἐπείσπεσόντων αὐτῷ τινῶν: b καὶ νυκτὸς ἐπείσπεσόντων αὐτῷ τοῦ Ἀγιοχριστοφορίτου Στεφάνου, τοῦ Τριψύχου Κωνσταντίνου καὶ τινος Δαδιβρηνοῦ Θεοδώρου: VAPW Niketas gives us the names of the murderers of Alexios II in version a.

274/25-29 τῆς...χαρτουλάριος: om. b John Kamateros, *epi tou kanikleiou* and Theodore Choumnos, the *chartoularios* dispose of the body of the young emperor.

Books X-XI: Andronikos I Komnenos (1183-1185)

276/20-24 βασιλεύσας δ' Ἀνδρόνικος αἰτεῖται τὸν πατριάρχην Βασίλειον καὶ τὴν τότε σύνοδον...: b ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοις δευτέραν αἰτεῖται χάριν Ἀνδρόνικος τὸν τῶν αὐτοῦ θελήσεων πληρωτὴν πατριάρχην, τὸν Καματηρὸν λέγω Βασίλειον, καὶ τὴν τότε σύνοδον....: VA Andronikos requests to be released from the oaths he had sworn to Mauel Komnenos and his son Alexios.

292/69-71 ταῦτόν...ἐγχρίπτουσιν: om. Wb Niketas uses harsh language against Andronikos.

292/80-81 ὁ δὲ Δούκας Ἀνδρόνικος: b ὁ δὲ Δούκας Ἀνδρόνικος καταπύγων ὦν καὶ γλοῖδος καὶ τὴν ἀναίδειαν ἐπὶ τοῦ προσώπου προβεβλημένος: VA

Reference to the malicious character of Andronikos Doukas, a supporter of Andronikos.

293/83-88 ὅτι...ἐπάγοντος: om. b More information on the character and deeds of Andronikos Doukas.

320/77-322/55 δεῖσαν...ἐκωμῶδει: om. b This is the longest addition to the discussion of the reign of Andronikos Komnenos in the a-text. Niketas begins by telling us that the emperor had prepared a fleet in order to repulse the Norman invasion (1185). Thereafter he relaxed his efforts, deeming that his preparations were sufficient. When Thessaloniki fell, Andronikos imprisoned the relatives of its governor, David Komnenos and delivered a public address to ease the fears of the citizenry. While the Normans advanced dangerously through Byzantine territory, Andronikos did nothing to impede their way, but instead indulged in carefree living with his courtesans. Niketas further informs us that the emperor was escorted at all times by foreign units who did not speak Greek and that at night a fierce dog guarded the doors of his bedchamber. In the final scene, Andronikos ridicules the stupidity of the Constantinopolitans, who are always eager to flatter and pay court to their sovereigns.

331/91ff ἔγραψε δὲ καὶ πρὸς τινὰς τῶν τὰ δημόσια ἐνεργούντων ἐπιστολὴν ἔχουσιν οὕτως. ἀληθινὸν τοῦ ψεύδους πρωτάγγελε, σὺ ἀσύνετέ μοι Συνέσιε, σὺ γαῦρε Γαβρᾶ καὶ σὺ ἀγοραῖε Λαχανᾶ ἤκουσται τῇ βασιλείᾳ μου ἀδικεῖν ὑμᾶς τὰ πολλά, καὶ ἢ τὸ ἀδικεῖν ἐάσατε ἢ τὸ ζῆν· τὸ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν ὑμᾶς καὶ ζῆν οὔτε τῷ θεῷ ἀρεστόν ἐστιν οὔτ' ἐμοὶ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτῷ ἀνεκτόν: Paraphrase/Theodore Skoutariotes. Andronikos sends letters to the rebellious Prouseans offering them amnesty for their crimes if they open the gates of the city to him and arrest the rebels Theodore Angelos, Lachanas and Synesios.

335/20-21 ὑπαγορεύοντος τοῦ πρωτασηκρήτις, ἀμφιπονουμένου τοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν δεήσεων, τοῦ δὲ πρωνοταρίου του δρόμου ταῖς φωναῖς ἀλαλάζοντος: bVAPW ὁ πρωτασηκρήτις ἦν ὁ Σκυλλίτζης Γεώργιος, ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν δεήσεων ὁ Πατρηνὸς Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ ὁ πρωνοτάριος ὁ Ἀλπούχειρ Μιχαήλ, ὁ πρόην

κριτῆς τοῦ βήλου: A^{mg} P^{mg} The names of certain influential supporters of Andronikos are given in marginal notes in mss. AP.

338/3-339/9 ἐνάγεται παρὰ τῶν οἰκείων εἰς τὴν τῶν ἐσομένων πρόγνωσιν δι' ἐργασίας ἀποτροπαίου, καίπερ ταῖς τοιαῖσδε πράξεσι μηδ' ὅλως πρότερον προσέχων τὸν νοῦν, ἀλλ' ὥς ἀθεμίτους ἀποτρεπομενος: Wb καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ θείου δὲ ὑφορώμενος ἐγκατάλειψιν...πρὸς τὴν διὰ θωπείας εἴτε καὶ θεραπείας τῶν ἐναγῶν δαιμόνων πρόγνωσιν τῶν μελλόντων ὁρμᾷ, καθὰ καὶ ὁ παλαιὸς ἐκεῖνος Σαούλ εἰς τὰ ἐγγαστριμύθους ὕστερον ἔβλεψεν, ἅς ἐδίωκε πρότερον τὸ θεῖον ἐαυτῷ ἱλεούμενος: VAP Andronikos turns to the prognostigation of the future.

339/20-22 ἐκκλίνων...ἔκφορα: om. Wb Andronikos refuses to take part in the prognostication rites for fear of exposure.

354/47ff καὶ δίκας ἀνάρσιον ὑπέσχεσ κάρα / ἀνθ' ᾧ ἄωρον ἐξέτιλας τὸν στάχυν / τὸν Ἀλεξίον τὸν γλυκὺν μεираκίσκον / Ἀνδρόνικε, φεῦ, τὸν βασίλειον τόκον / ὃν λαγόνες γῆς τῆς βασιλίδος Ξένης / ὑπανέδωκεν ὡς ἀρίστῳ γηπόνῳ / τῷ βασιλεῖ Μανουήλ καὶ φυτοσπόρῳ, / ὅστις ἔλαχεν ἐν βασιλεύσει κλέος: add.V Lamentation in verse on the murder of Alexios II.

Books XII-XIV: Isaakios II Angelos (1185-1195)

373/74-78 φάσκων...θεοτρόπια: om. Wb Isaakios Angelos prematurely boasts of his victory over the Vlacho-Bulgarians.

374/79-84 οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Ἀσὰν ἐς τὴν Μυσίαν αὐθις ἐπανῆλθον μετὰ Σκυθῶν: b οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Ἀσὰν βάρβαροι τὸν Ἰστρον διαβάντες καὶ τοῖς Σκύθαις συμμίξαντες πλεῖστον ἐκεῖθεν συμμαχικόν, καθὼς ἤρουντο, στρατολογήσαντες τὴν πατρίδα Μυσίαν ἐπανῆκον. καὶ σεσαρωμένην ἀτεχνῶς εὐρόντες αὐτὴν καὶ Ῥωμαϊκοῦ κεκενωμένην στρατεύματος μετὰ κόμπου ἐπεισέφρησαν μείζονος οἷα λεγεῶνας πνευμάτων τὴν ἐκ Σκυθῶν ἐπαγόμενοι σύναρσιν: VAPW The followers of the Vlacho-Bulgarian rebel leader

Asan enlist a large number of Cuman auxiliaries and arrive at Mysia. The condition of the province is described in VAPW.

374/84-95 ὅθεν...βασιλεῖαν: οὐκοῦν οὐδ' ἡγάπων, εἰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἔχουσι σώζειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ Ῥωμαίων ἐπήεσαν. ἔξεισιν οὖν κατ' αὐτῶν ὁ σεβαστοκράτωρ Ἰωάννης ὁ Δούκας καὶ τὴν στρατιὰν ἐπαινετῶς διακυβερνήσας καὶ τοὺς πολεμίους οὐ βραχέα λυπήσας τὸν στρατηγὸν ἀποζώννυται ὑποβλεπόμενος βασιλεῖαν: b Abridged account of the campaign of the *sebastokrator* John Doukas against the Vlacho-Bulgarians (1186) in VAPW.

374/1-376/26 διαδέχεται...ἔχονται: διαδέχεται δὲ τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ὁ καίσαρ Ἰωάννης ὁ Καντακουζηνός, γαμβρὸς ὢν τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπ' ἀδελφῇ. ἀνὴρ δ' οὗτος ἀξιοθέατος τὸ εἶδος καὶ πλουτῶν ἐμπειρίαν τῶν τακτικῶν, τότε δὲ οὐ καλῶς τὸν κατὰ Βλάχων διεστρατήγησε πόλεμον: APWb Abridged account of the campaign of John Kantakouzenos against the Vlacho-Bulgarians.

376/27-377/51 καὶ...τροπώσασθαι: ὅθεν διαδέχεται τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ὁ Βρανᾶς Ἀλέξιος. ὁ δὲ καὶ πάλαι μὲν ἐνήδρευε τῇ βασιλείᾳ, ἡνίκα τὸν κατὰ Λατίνων ἐστρατήγει πόλεμον, ὥστε καὶ νύκτωρ τὸ τοῦ μεγίστου τεμένους ἄδυτον εἰσιὼν ἀνασείειν πρὸς στάσιν ἐπειρᾶτο τὸν ὄχλον: APWb Condensed account of the first rebellion of Alexios Branas in 1185.

404/94-1 ταῦτα δὲ γράφων ἦν ἐν τῷ δοξάζειν παρ' ἑαυτῷ τινῶν ὑφηγήσεσι φονούντων μᾶλλον ἀπὸ γαστρὸς ἢ περ προειδόντων τὰ μέλλοντα: Pb οὐκ οἶδα τίνων εἰσηγουμένων ἐπισφαλῶς μέντοι καὶ τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσιν οὐχ ἀρμοδίως: W ταῦτα δὲ γράφων ἦν ἐν τῷ δοξάζειν παρ' ἑαυτῷ καθάπερ ἀπὸ τρίποδος τοῦ τότε πατριάρχου Δοσιθέου, περὶ οὗ ἐροῦμεν τὰ εἰκότα μετὰ βραχύ: VA Isaakios Angelos is lead to believe that the German Emperor Frederick Barbarossa plans to attack Constantinople. The name of his advisor in this matter is only supplied in VA.

404/7-13 καὶ...λεγόμενα: om. b Isaakios Angelos boasts of an imminent triumph against the German crusaders.

405/14-16 ἦν δὲ τις Δοσίθεος ἐν τῇ τῶν Στουδίου μονῇ τὴν ἄσκησιν μετιών, ἐκ Βενετίκων δ' ἔλκειν τὸ γένος ἐλέγετο: b ὁ δὲ Δοσίθεος οὗτος ἦν ἐν τῇ τοῦ Στουδίου ἱερᾷ μάνδρα τὴν ἄσκησιν μετιών, ἐκ Βενετίκων δ' ἔλκειν τὸ γένος καὶ πατρὸς τοῦνομα Βιτικλίνου γενόμεναι ἐλέγετο: V
Information on the future patriarch Dositheos.

405/19-20 καταλύσαντος...ἀναρπάζεται: καὶ πατριάρχης Ἱεροσολύμων προυβέβλητο καταλύσαντος τὴν ζωὴν τοῦ τὸν θρόνον τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων τότε διεπόντος Λεοντίου, ἀνδρὸς χαρίεντος τὸ ἦθος καὶ διαβοήτου τὴν ἀρετὴν:
Pb Dositheos becomes patriarch of Jerusalem after the death of Leontios.

406/37-38 ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν τόπον διασαφήσασα, καθ' ὃν τὴν οἰκησιν ἔλαχεν:
om. b The Theotokos appears to Isaakios Angelos in a dream and shows him the dwelling where the future Patriarch Leontios (Theotokites) lives; 38-40 ἀλλ' οὐπω ἐνιαυτὸς ἐξίκετο, καὶ καταστρέφεται καὶ οὗτος τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ ὑψώματος: Pb ἀλλ' οὐπω ἐνιαυτὸς ἐξίκετο, καὶ καταστρέφει καὶ τὸν Θεοτοκίτην τουτονὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ ὑψώματος ἐν οὐδενὶ θέμενος λόγῳ ὅσα ἐπὶ κοινοῦ συλλόγου διείλεκται: VAW Leontios (Theotokites) is ousted from the patriarchal throne.

408/87-90 τότε...αὐτοκράτορα: om. Wb Patriarch Dositheos turns to the prognostication of future events and dream interpretation. Isaakios becomes heavily dependent on him.

422/66-73 σύν...ὑποπτήσσοντος: σύν ἑτέροις δὲ καὶ ὁ τοῦ ἀδελφὸς Ἀλέξιος ἔξεισιν, ὅς καὶ ὕστερον ἐβασίλευσεν. ἀλλ' ἔτι τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτως ὄντων ἡωρημένων καὶ τοῦ μὲν αἰὶ ἐμπλατυνομένου τε καὶ κρατυνομένου, τοῦ δὲ σεβαστοκράτορος περὶ συλλογὴν ἐμπονουμένου στρατεύματος: b σύν ἑτέροις δὲ καὶ ὁ τοῦ ἀδελφὸς Ἀλέξιος ἔξεισιν, ὅς καὶ ὕστερον ἐβασίλευσεν. πλὴν καὶ οὗτος κατ' οὐδεμίαν μάχην συνεπλάκη τῷ Ἀλεξίῳ, ἀλλ' ὥς πλεῖστον ἀποσκηνούμενος ἐπισυνίστη μόνον τὸ λείπον τῇ παροικίας, ὅποσον γε ἐκείνῳ μὴ προσεχώρησε, καὶ συνεῖχε τὸ διαρρέον καὶ μεταβαῖνον εἰς τὸν ἀναβεβιωκότα τοῦτον Ἀλέξιον. ἀλλ' ἔτι τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτως ὄντων ἡωρημένων καὶ τοῦ μὲν αἰὶ ἐμπλατυνομένου τε καὶ κρατυνομένου, τοῦ δὲ σεβαστοκράτορος ὑποφεύγοντος καὶ ἀγῶνα τὸν

ἐνώπιον ὑποπτήσσοντος: VAW Campaign of the *sebastokrator* Alexios (the future Alexios III) against a Pseudo-Alexios in the cities along the Maender (1193).

423/8-20 κᾶν...φωτός: om. b Isaakios Komnenos, a nephew of Andronikos I instigates a rebellion against Isaakios Angelos, but is captured and tortured to death. Constantine Tatikios and another scion of the Komnenian family rebel but are captured and blinded.

425/57-68 ἐν...τούτου: om. b Additional information on the conspiracy of Andronikos Komnenos, governor of Thessaloniki against Isaakios Angelos.

427/25-41 θαυμάσαι...ἐπέλεγεν: om. b Emperor Manuel's illegitimate son Alexios, alleged accomplice in the conspiracy of Andronikos Komnenos (governor of Thessaloniki), is tonsured a monk on a monastery on Mount Papykios and suffers because of the sins committed by his father. Three months later he is recalled by Isaakios Angelos.

428/51-62 ὁ...προέθετο: om. b The son of the governor of Thessaloniki, Andronikos Komnenos, attempts to seize the throne in the manner that Isaakios had in 1185, but is captured and blinded.

432/78-433/88 ἐλέγετο...παραδιδούσαν: om. b Isaakios is persuaded by Patriarch Dositheos that he is destined to acquire absolute power and rule over all nations.

436/89-437/15 τοσοῦτον...ἀντιπάλους: om. b The Vlacho-Bulgarian rebels rejoice in their continual victories over the Byzantines. They mock Isaakios and predict that as long as the Angelos dynasty is in power they will prevail. They continue their advance on Byzantine territory, attacking Philippopolis, besieging Sardica and assaulting Andrianople.

440/81-85 καὶ...ἀποφράπτουσα: ὅθεν ἀπαραίτητον ᾤετο ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἀσπᾶσιον, ὅσα καὶ τὸ παμβότανον τοῦ ἀγροῦ, εἰπεῖν δὲ καὶ τριπόθητον ὡς τὸ τοῦ Περόζου μάργαρον παρὰ τῷδε τῷ βασιλεῖ συλλελόγιστο: b καὶ ἦν βομβυλιὸς ἀτεχνῶς εἶτε κώνωψ ὥτιον περιβομβῶν λέοντος ἢ μυρμηκάνθρωπος

μελάγχροος τὸ τῆς γῆς μέγιστον ἄγχος διακυβερνῶν ἐλέφαντα ἢ μήρινθος λεπτὴ ἀπὸ ῥινὸς ἐφέλκουσα κάμηλον, εἶπη δ' ἄν τι οὐκ ἀκόμψως καὶ παχεῖα κυψελὶ περὶ τῆς βασιλικῆς ἀκοῆς ἐνσκήψασα ἔλιγμα καὶ τῶν ἐτέρωθεν ἐνηχουμένων τὴν εἰσροὴν ἀποφράττουσα: VAP Information on Constantine Mesopotamites, *epi tou kanikeiou* under Isaakios Angelos.

440/85-441/9 ἢ...διετετράνωτο: om. b Additional negative comments on Constantine Mesopotamites.

441/18-442/32 χαίρων...ἐπωπτάνετο: om. b Isaakios fills the palace with mimes, minstrels and concubines and hosts scandalous dinner parties. He spends most of his time relaxing in the countryside and rarely makes an appearance in the capital.

442/38-47 προθέμενος...οὐτοσί: om. b Isaakios constructs a tower to strengthen the defences of Blachernai, but demolishes churches in the eastern district of the city as well as the building of the *genikon* and the house of Mangana.

443/59-444/10 ἀλλὰ...ὄφλημα: om. b This is the longest and most damaging addition made to the discussion of the reign of Isaakios Angelos. Niketas begins by telling us that the emperor stripped the sacred furniture and holy vessels from the renowned church of Nea in the Great Palace, which he then kept for his private use. He further removed adornments from holy crosses and subsequently used them to make necklaces and collars. As a result, Niketas charges him with the grave offence of sacrilege. The emperor adulterated the silver and issued debased coinage. He also increased taxation and squandered the public revenues on profligate living. Public offices were regularly put up for sale, and only on occasion did Isaakios appoint uncorrupted tax officials to the provinces.

447/91-92 οἱ δὲ γε τοῦτον τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀνατρέψοντες ἐγγύς ὄντες παρεβλέποντο: b ὁ δὲ τοῦτον τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀνατρέψων ἐγγύς ὢν καὶ συνεστῶς παραβλέπετο: VAPW Isaakios does not suspect any of those close to him of conspiring against him. In the final version, Niketas refers to Alexios only.

448/8-9 καὶ ὥς πλείονές εἰσι φιλαλέξιοι μᾶλλον ἥπερ φιλισταάκιοι: b εἰ καὶ παραπετάσματι φιλίας συγκαλύπτων λέληθε τὸν μισάδελφον: VA Isaakios dismisses the warnings about the conspirator/s.

450/59-61 τῶν δὲ εἰ γεγονότων συχνοὶ τῇ ἀκομιστίᾳ τοῦ κρατοῦντος δυσχεραίνειν πλαττόμενοι καὶ τῷ μὴ κατὰ τὸν εἰκότα λόγον τὰ κοινὰ διοικεῖσθαι πράγματα (καὶ...πράγματα: εἰπεῖν δὲ καὶ τὰς μεταβολὰς τῶν πραγμάτων κατὰ πολὺ συμβαλόμενας αὐτοῖς ἐς χρηματισμὸν κατανοήσαντες APW), τότε τὰ ὑποδεδυκότα τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ ὑποθαλπόμενα τοῦ στήθους ἀναμηνύοντες εἰς φῶς προήνεγκαν: APWb ὁ δ' ἀδελφὸς πάλαι ἐνεδρεύων τῇ βασιλείᾳ, τότε τὰ ὑποδεδυκότα τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ ὑποθαλπόμενα τοῦ στήθους ἀναμηνύων εἰς φῶς προήνεγκε: V The conspiracy against Isaakios Angelos is prepared; in version b by a group of disgruntled nobles, in a by Alexios Angelos.

450/64-67 ὁ δὲ ἐπισπένσθαι οἱ ἀπείπατο, πρὸς σχάσιν φλεβὸς ἐτοιμασθῆναι σκηψάμενος: b ὁ δὲ τὸ πρὸς τὸ ἐν χερσὶν ἔργον ἐτοιμασάμενος ἐπισπένσθαι οἱ ἀπείπατο, πρὸς σχάσιν φλεβὸς ἐτοιμασθῆναι λέγων, μαλακισμὸν ὑποκρινάμενος σώματος: VAPW Alexios declines Isaakios' offer to join him in the chase.

450/67-75 οἱ δὲ τοῦ σκέμματος κοινωνοῦντες τῷ Ἀλεξίῳ λοιμοὶ καὶ κύβοι καὶ εὗριποι καὶ σκηνης γέμοντες ἄνθρωποι ὥσει σταδίους τρεῖς τὸν βασιλέα προϊόντα ἰδόντες συναρπάζουσιν εἰρωνικῶς τὸν Ἀλέξιον καὶ εἰς τὴν βασίλειον σκηνὴν τοῦτον εἰσάγουσι καὶ ἀναγορέουσιν αὐτοκράτορα: b καὶ οὕτως ὁ μὲν ἔξεισι καὶ μόνος καὶ τῆς προκειμένης ἔχεται, ὁ δὲ ὥσει σταδίους τρεῖς τὸν ἀδελφὸν καὶ βασιλέα προϊόντα ἰδὼν τῆς σκηνῆς μετὰ τῶν πέλας καὶ φίλων, οἷς πεπολίτευτο καὶ οἱ συνδιώκουν αὐτῷ τὰ κατ' ἔφεσιν, τὴν βασίλειον εἴσεισι καταγωγὴν. ἦσαν δ' οὗτοι ὁ Βρανᾶς Θεόδωρος, ὁ Παλαιολόγος Γεώργιος, ὁ Πετράλιφας Ἰωάννης, ὁ Ῥαοὺλ Κωνσταντῖνος, ὁ Καντακουζηνὸς Μανουήλ καὶ συχνοὶ ἕτεροι...: VAPW Alexios is proclaimed emperor. The names of his co-conspirators are given in VAPW.

452/95 παρὰ Παντευγένου τινός: om. b Isaakios Angelos is apprehended by a certain Pantevgenos.

Books XV-XVI: Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203)

453/3-454/21 καὶ...ἀφορῶντες: καὶ τόνδε μὲν τὸν τρόπον ὁ Ἄγγελος Ἰσαάκιος τῆς ἀρχῆς καταστρέφεται, οὐ γνώμη μᾶλλον τοῦ αὐταδέλφου ἢ βία, ὡς ἦδετο, καὶ συνδρομῇ παντός τοῦ στρατεύματος, κατ' αὐτοῦ σπασαμένων τῶν πολλῶν τὰ ξίφη καὶ διηπειληκότων ἐκείνῳ θάνατον, εἰ μὴ τὴν ἀρχὴν καταδέξηται: b Niketas relates that Alexios was forced into accepting the emperorship.

454/21-26 βασιλεύσας δ' Ἀλέξιος οὐκ εὐθύς τὴν μεγαλόπολιν εἴσεισιν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς μὲν τοῖς κατὰ δύσιν προσανέχει πράγμασι, πάσχουσι κακῶς παρὰ τοῦ Πέτρου καὶ τοῦ Ἀσάν: b 455/49-52 οὕτω δὲ πάντα τετελεκώς ἢ μᾶλλον συντετελεκώς οἰκειότερον εἰπεῖν, ὡς καὶ χαρίζεσθαι τῷ καιρῷ τε καὶ τοῖς πράγμασι βιαζόμενος διαφίησιν ἔπειτα τὰ στρατεύματα εἰς ἥθη τὰ οἰκεῖα ἐπανελθεῖν μηδένα θέμενος λόγον, εἰ τὰ ἐν ποσὶν οἱ Βλάχοι ληΐζονται: VAPW The new emperor returns to the capital. According to version b he first dealt with the Vlacho-Bulgarians, while in version a, he simply dismissed his troops and returned to the capital.

454/26-457/95 τῇ δ' αὐτοῦ σύζυγῳ τὸ συμβὰν ἐπ' αὐτῷ δῆλον θέμενος εἶχε καὶ πρὸς ὁρμὴν μίαν τὸ τῆς πολιτείας ἀνευφημῆσαν αὐτὸν πλήρωμα. τὸ τε γὰρ τῆς συγκλήτου μέρος ἰλαρῶς τὰ ἡκουτισμένα τοῖς ὡσὶν ἐδέξατο καὶ τῶν τοῦ δήμου πρὸς οὐδέν τις ἀτάλασθον ἔβλεψεν ἢ ἐβαττάρισεν...(75-95) συναπτῶς δὲ καὶ τὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας πλήρωμα τὸν Κομνηνὸν Ἀλέξιον ἀνεῖπεν αὐτοκράτορα καὶ οὐδεὶς ἦν ἐκ τοῦδε γνωσιμαχῶν, ἀλλὰ πάντες τὸ μέγιστον ἀρχεῖον καταλαμβάνοντες τῇ Δουκαίνῃ Εὐφροσύνῃ τὴν καθήκουσαν βασιλίσσαις τιμὴν καὶ θεραπείαν ἀπένεμον: b A significantly condensed and favourable account of the reception of the news of the coup in Constantinople.

457/95ff καὶ τοιαύτη μὲν ἡ προεισόδιος ἐτοιμασία τοῦ βασιλέως ἦν Ἀλεξίου, ἀναίμακτος πάντῃ καὶ μηδένα τῶν ὅλων ἐς οὐσίαν ὀπωσοῦν ἀδικήσασα. μεθ' ἡμέρας δὲ τινὰς ἐπάνεισι καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τὴν βασιλίδᾳ τῶν

πόλεων, οὐ πᾶσιν ἀσπάσιος (εἰρήσεται γὰρ τὸ ἀληθές) δι' ὅσαπερ ἐς τὸν ὁμόγνιον ἐκείνῳ καὶ βασιλέα συμβέβηκεν Ἰσαάκιον: b Alexios was not liked by everyone because of what he had done to his brother Isaakios.

459/54-461/14 ὁ δὲ...ἀνέφερον: ἐνδιατρίψας δὲ τοῖς ἀρχείοις ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ πολλοὺς δωρεαῖς πιάνας: b Alexios distributes wealth. The account in the a-text is as follows. Alexios repudiates his surname Angelos and takes that of Komnenos. The emperor does not concern himself much with the administration of public affairs and depletes the public revenues. The empress is an adulteress who is adept in the prognostication of the future. She easily overpowers her husband and assumes power equal to his own, giving orders and nullifying his decrees.

461/14-463/78 ἐς τὴν ἕω διαπεραιοῦται καὶ τῇ τῶν Βιθυνῶν παραβάλλει ἐπαρχία. ἤκηκόει γὰρ ὡς Ἀλέξιος τις ἐκ Κιλικῶν ὁρμώμενος τῷ τοῦ βασιλέως Ἀλεξίου ἐποχούμενος ὀνόματι, ὃν ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐγείνατο Μανουήλ, τῷ τῆς πόλεως Ἀγκύρας σατραπεύοντι Πέρσῃ προσεληλύθει καὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ προσδεχθεὶς ἀσμένως σύναρσιν δέχεται πρὸς τὸ Ῥωμαίοις ἀντιφέρεσθαι. Ἀφικόμενος οὖν κατὰ τὰ Μελάγγεια καὶ πρὸς τῶν ἐκεῖθι πολυχνίων καὶ ἐρυμάτων βασιλεὺς ἀναγορευθεὶς ἐπανέζευξεν αὐθις ἐς τὸ Βυζάντιον πυρὶ παραδοὺς ἔνια τῶν φρουρίων, πλεῖστα δὲ καὶ ὑπαγόμενος, ὅποσα τῷ Ψευδαλεξίῳ προσέρρεπον. μετὰ μικρὸν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἀναιρεῖται ὁ νεωτεροποιὸς Ἀλέξιος καὶ τῶν προσγείων βασιλείων τὰ ζοφώδη ἀντιδέχεται δώματα...: b Abridged account of Alexios Angelos' campaign against the Pseudo-Alexios from Cilicia (1195).

464/14-17 κᾶν...αὐτοῦ: om. b The former ruler of Cyprus, Isaakios Komnenos is poisoned on the orders of the emperor.

465/18-468/24 ἐπὶ...ἀπέβη: πλείω δ' ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν πρὸς ἐσπέραν χωρῶν τιθέμενος τημελούχησιν. μετὰ συχνῆς χειρὸς τὸν Ἀσπιέτην Ἀλέξιον πέπομφε τοῖς ἐκ τοῦ Αἵμου βάρβαροις ἀντιταξόμενον. μὴ διαστρατηγήσας δ' οὗτος ἀρίστως τὸν πόλεμον ὑπὸ τῶν Βλάχων κεχείρωτο. ἀπιδὼν δὲ καὶ πρὸς δευτέραν τῶν κακῶς πασχόντων ἀσφάλειαν τὸν ἑαυτοῦ γαμβρόν Ἰσαάκιον τὸν σεβαστοκράτορα μετὰ μείζονος ἐπαφῆκε στρατεύματος. πλὴν καὶ οὗτος νέος ὢν καὶ προσεχεῖ τινι κατορθώματι ἐπαρθεὶς καὶ φανείς

έντεϋθεν έαυτοϋ θρασύτερος, μὴ προεξετάσας τὴν τῶν πολεμίων δύναμιν, ὡς εἰς κυνηγέσιον κνωδάλων μεθ' ὀρμῆς ἀσχέτου καὶ ἀνέτων ῥυτήρων φέρεται, ἔνθα τὸ διάφορον ἐνηυλίζετο, καὶ μάχην ὡς εἶχε συνάπτει. ὁ δ' Ἀσάν (οὗτος γὰρ ἀντιπολεμῶν ἦν τῷ σεβαστοκράτορι) εἰς ἐνέδρας καὶ λόχους τὸ οἰκεῖον καταδιελόμενος στράτευμα τροποῦται οὕτω τὸν Ἰσαάκιον ἱκανῶς μὲν διαγωνισάμενον, τέλος δὲ χειρωθέντα παρὰ Σκύθου τινός: b Shortened account of campaign of the *sebastokrator* Isaakios against the Vlacho-Bulgarians (1195).

470/64-72 μηδὲ...ἐπιτρέψαντες: om. b The Vlach commander Ivanko (having already slain the rebel leader Asan) makes plans to rule more equitably and make peace with the Byzantine emperor.

471/91-472/18 ὁ δ' Ἰβαγκὸς δεδήλωκε βασιλεῖ τὸ γινόμενον καὶ διηρέθιζε τοῦτον στεῖλαιί τινα μετὰ στρατιᾶς τὸν παραληψόμενον τὸν Τέρβονον. στέλλει οὖν ὁ βασιλεὺς τὸν πρωτοστράτορα Μανουήλ τὸν Καμύτζην. ὁ δὲ μετὰ τῶν συνεπομένων αὐτῷ δυνάμεων ἄκροις ποσὶ τῶν τῆς Μυσίας ὁρῶν παλίσσυτος γίνεται. καὶ αὖθις οὖν πρὸς τοῦ βασιλέως ἡ πράξις αὕτη μετὰ στρατιᾶς ἐπεκέκριτο μείζονος. οὐ προύβαινε δὲ καὶ εἰς πέρας ἡ βασιλικὴ πρόθεσις. ἀπειρηκῶς τοίνυν ὁ Ἰβαγκὸς ἔξεισιν ἐκ Μυσίας λάθρα: b Highly condensed and simplified version of the revolution of Ivanko with the help of the Byzantines.

472/23-473/45 τότε...στρατεύματος: τότε δ' οὖν ὁ Πέτρος, συλλήπτορα τῶν πόνων καὶ μερίτην τῆς δυναστείας προσελόμενος, τὸν Ἰωάννην οὐκ ἐξ ἀντιθέτου τῷ τεθνεῶτι Ἀσάν τὰ Ῥωμαίων ἔκειρε πράγματα. ἡ γὰρ φύσις καὶ τούτῳ θηρωδίαν κατὰ Ῥωμαίων ἐβράβευσεν: b Ioannitsa becomes ruler of the Vlacho-Bulgarians.

473/64-475/25 τίς....ἀποτριψάμενος: om. b War with the Turks (1195-96). Alexios refuses to sign a peace treaty with the ruler of Ankara [Muhyi al-Din] and this leads to war. The narrative concentrates on the Turkish siege of the city of Dadibra. Alexios sends a relief force headed by Theodore Branas, Andronikos Katakalon and

Theodore Kazanes, but they cannot lift the siege. The city submits to the Turks and Alexios is forced to sign a peace treaty and pay tribute to the Turkish ruler.

475/26-32 ἀλλ' οὕπω καιρὸς συχνὸς παρελήλυθε καὶ ὁ τότε: b ἀλλ' οὕπω ἡ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ τὴν ἄλμην ταύτην ἀπέπτυσεν ἀνένευσέ, καὶ δεινότερων ἀγγέλμασιν ἀκουσμάτων βάλλεται ἄλλων...: VAPW.

475/38-42 καὶ...προθέσεως: om. b The emperor of Germany, Henry VI, hesitates to attack Byzantium because of the magnitude and difficulty of the task and because he is restricted by Pope Celestine III.

476/57-59 προσαπῆται...στρατιᾶς: om. b Henry VI further demands to be recognised as Roman emperor and requests naval assistance for the Crusader States in Palestine.

477/67 κατένευσεν οὐ πράγματι μᾶλλον ἢ σχήματι χρημάτων τὴν εἰρήνην ἀλλάξασθαι: b κατένευσε χρημάτων τὴν εἰρήνην ἀλλάξασθαι: VAPW Alexios agrees to pay the tribute to Henry VI.

477/68-478/1 πράγμα...καλλωπίζονται: om. b Detailed description of the audience Alexios Angelos holds with the envoys of Henry VI (25 December, 1196).

478/1-479/48 ἡρίθμουν δὲ οἱ πρέσβεις τὰ ὑπὲρ εἰρήνης αἰτούμενα χρήματα εἰς πλεῖστα χρυσίου κεντηνάρια, πρευσβεύσοντα οὖν ἐς τὸν ῥῆγα πέπομφε τὸν Φιλοκάλην Εὐμάθιον, ἑπαρχον ὄντα τῆς πόλεως, ἐκόντως ὑποδύοντα τὸν πρέσβιν καὶ δεηθέντα μετὰ τῶν ἐπαρχικῶν παρασήμων τῷ τῶν Ἀλαμανῶν ἐποφθῆναι ῥηγί. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰ τῆς εἰρήνης ἔνεκα δοθησόμενα χρήματα εἰς δέκα πρὸς τοῖς ἕξ περιέστησαν κεντηνάρια, ὁ μὲν Φιλοκάλης τὴν τούτων ἀποστολὴν κατὰ Σικελίαν προσεδέχετο. ὁ δὲ θεὸς λύει τὴν δόσιν ταύτην καινοπρεπῶς θανάτῳ γὰρ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ὁ ῥῆξ ἐγένετο, οὐ Ῥωμαίοις δὲ μόνον πολυάρατος ὁ θάνατος τούτου δέδοκται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἐσπερίοις τρισάμενος ἔθνεσιν: b. Condensed account of the delivery of the tribute to the German emperor. No mention of the raising of the funds is found in the b-text

480/54-62 ὥχρος...θάνατος: om. b; 65-67 καὶ...θανεῖν: om. b; 67-68 καὶ...κατεσκάφησαν: om. b; 69-72 καὶ...ἐμπερικροτεῖ: om. b; 75-76 οὐ...βασανίσας: om. b Additional information on Henry VI.

482/8-20 στέλλεται...ἡβούλετο: στέλλεται οὖν κατὰ τοῦ Καφοῦρη μετὰ τριάκοντα νηῶν ὁ Στειριόνης Ἰωάννης, κακοδαιμονεῖ δὲ παρά δόξαν...: b Shortened and favourable account of the campaign of John Steiriones against the pirate Gafforio.

482/21-483-33 βασιλεύς...ἀνεψιόν: ὁ τοίνυν βασιλεύς τριήρεις ἄλλας καταρτισάμενος καὶ ταύτας αὖθις τῷ Στειριόνη παραδεδωκὼς κατὰ τοῦ Καφοῦρη ἐξέπεμψεν. ἐφίστατε τοίνυν τῷ πολεμίῳ ἀπροσδόκητος ὁ Στειριόνης μετὰ τῆς ἐπομένης αὐτῷ Πισσαϊκῆς δυνάμεως καὶ μάχην συνάψας αὐτὸν τε τὸν Καφοῦρην ἐλὼν ἀναιρεῖ καὶ τὰς ἐκείνου νῆας πλὴν τεττάρων αἶρεῖ· αὗται δὲ τὸν ἐκείνου ἦγον ἀνεψιόν: b Shortened and favourable account of defeat and capture of Gafforio.

483/35-493/66 ἀλλὰ...φρόνημα: om. b This addition in the a-text, numbering a total of ten pages in the edition of van Dieten, is by far the longest made to the discussion of the reign of Alexios III Angelos. This emperor abolishes the sale of offices, but the measure is opposed by his relatives and does not succeed. The sale of offices thus becomes rampant and Alexios is not able to prevent it or oppose his powerful relatives, who gather in the revenues. Empress Euphrosyne attempts to remedy the situation and appoints as her minister Constantine Mesopotamites, who quickly takes over the entire administration. Then, her brother Basil Kamateros and her son-in-law, Andronikos Kontostephanos hatch a plot to dispose of Euphrosyne. The empress is accused of adultery and banished from the palace, while her alleged lover is murdered on the orders of the emperor. Alexios then sets out for a campaign against the Vlach commander Chrysos at Kypsella, which is unsuccessful. Six months later, Euphrosyne is reinstated and becomes more powerful than ever. Constantine Mesopotamites reaches the pinnacle of power in both the affairs of the state and the church but is soon toppled by a new conspiracy led by the *megas doux*, Michael Stryphnos. Mesopotamites is replaced by Theodore Eirenikos, who prevails over his colleagues by intrigue.

493/71-83 τοίνυν...ἀναδείκνυσι: om. b Additional information on the episode where the ruler of Ikonion, Kaykhusraw seizes two Arabian stallions sent as a gift from the sultan of Egypt to Alexios Angelos.

494/15-496/53 ἔνθα...διεπράττοντο: om. b Kaykhusraw assigns villages and fertile lands to his Byzantine captives of war. The Byzantines prefer to submit to the Turkish ruler rather than return to their own lands because of the iniquity that prevails in Byzantium and the frequent and violent changes in government.

496/54-74 ἀλλ'...συνηθρίζοντο: ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς στρατιὰν κατὰ τῶν Τούρκων ἐκπέμψας τινὰς ἐκ μέρους ἐλήϊσατο δι' Ἀνδρονίκου τοῦ Δούκα καὶ τούτων οἵπερ ἐνηυλίζοντο ταῖς τοῦ Ἀρσανῆ σκηναῖς, καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ βασιλεὺς ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Βιθυνίαν ἀφίκετο μέρεσιν. ἐπιστάντος δ' ἔαρος αὐτογνωμόνως ὁ βασιλεὺς οὗτος κινούμενος ἀποθαρρεῖ πρᾶξιν, ἥνπερ ὁ λόγος...: b Alexios organizes a campaign against the Turks (1199). In version b, we are offered a shortened account.

498/16-22 οἱ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς γένους τῷ βασιλεῖ τοῖς ἐξ ὀσφύος σφίσι τὴν ἀρχὴν ἠνδρολόγουν: The relatives of the emperor covet the throne. Account is more detailed in version a.

499/54-501/6 ὁ...εἰργάσαντο: τοῦ δὲ δὴ βασιλέως ἐκ καχεξίας τῶν ἄρθρων εἰσέτι πάσχοντος, Σκύθαι μετὰ μοίρας Βλάχων τοῖς Θρακικοῖς ἐπήεσαν μέρεσι καὶ ἐξ ἐφόδου ταυτὶ ἔκειρον. ὁ δὲ τὴν Βιζύην φυλάσσων Ῥωμαϊκὸς στρατὸς μαθὼν τοὺς Σκύθας μετὰ λείας ἐπανιέναι τὴν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἐτράπετο· καὶ κρατεῖ τὸ ἡμέτερον στράτευμα, καὶ φόνος γίνεται τῶν Σκυθῶν καὶ τὸ αἰχμαλωσίας πλεῖστον ἀνίεται, καὶ τοῦτ' ἐπὶ βραχύ· ἡ γὰρ σύμφυτος καὶ μανιώδης τισι λίχνευσις ἐπὶ τοῖς μηδαμῶς ἐκείνοις καθήκουσι τὴν νίκην ἔφθειρεν. ὅλοι γὰρ τοῦ ἀφαρπάζειν καὶ μεταφέρειν γενόμενοι ἅπερ ἦγον οἱ Σκύθαι τὰς Ῥωμαϊκὰς χώρας πορθήσαντες τὸ ἀπὸν ἤδη καὶ δραπετεῦον πολέμιον καθ' ἑαυτῶν ἐπέστρεψαν: b Incursion of the Vlachs and the Cumans into Thrace (1199) and a shortened account of the Byzantine response.

503/36-504/55 ἐνίοις μὲν οὖν ἐδόκει παραλλάξαι τὸν Πρόσακον καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ πολισμάτια μετελθεῖν καὶ μετὰ τὴν τούτων χείρῳσιν τῷ Προσάκῳ παρεμβαλεῖν. οὕτω γὰρ ἐσεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ στράτευμα εὐθαρσέστερον τὰ εὐχείρωτα καταστρεψάμενον πρότερον καὶ λείαν ἐκεῖθεν περιβαλόμενον, καὶ αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν Χρύσον τῇ βίᾳ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀγχόμενον μεταβουλεύσασθαι τι χρηστότερον, ἐνδόντα τοῦ ἄγαν ἢ καὶ ἀπογνόντα τῶν καθ' αὐτόν. ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς εὐθυρώς ἐς τὸν Πρόσακον ἄγειν ἐγνώκει τὴν στρατιάν καὶ κατ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ Χρύσου φέρειν ἀντία τὰ ὅπλα καὶ τὸ δόρυ διαγκωνίζεσθαι, ὡς "εἰ οὗτος ἀλώσεται γνωματεύων, οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις ἐς τὸ ἐξῆς ἀντιστήσεται": b Campaign against the rebel Drobomir Chrysos (1999). This is a shortened and favourable account of the deliberations of the Byzantine war council on stratagem.

504/55-70 καὶ...πτέρον: om. b Fictitious speech of the *parakeimomenos*, George Oinaiates in front of the war council.

504/75-82 ὅτε...ἐπένευσεν: om.b. The Turkish allies of Alexios Angelos take Christian Vlach captives of war. The most devout among the Byzantines protest against this action for fear of arousing the wrath of God, but the emperor dismisses their counsel.

507/42-59 καὶ νυκτός δὲ οἴνων δοχεῖα διαχαλῶντες ἄνωθεν τυμπανοειδῇ ἐκ λύγων καὶ διάκεινα ἐξίστων τῷ δούπῳ τὸ στράτευμα. ὅμως καὶ οὕτως ἔχων ὁ Χρύσος ἐς ξυμβάσεις ἐτράπετο καὶ δεῖται τοῦ βασιλέως κατὰ συγχώρησιν αὐτοῦ κατέχειν τὸν Πρόσακον, ἐπὶ δὲ καὶ γυναικὶ συζευχθῆναι μιᾷ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ βασιλικοῦ. βασιλεὺς οὖν τὰς αἰτήσεις αὐτοῦ δεξάμενος ἐκ τοῦ Προσάκου μεθίσταται καὶ τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν εἰσιῶν μίαν τῶν εὐγενῶν εἰς γαμετὴν πέπομφεν ἐκείνῳ: b Peace agreement with Chrysos. Version b omits all details relating to the final stages of the campaign as well as to the clauses of the treaty.

508/67-509/17 τότε...σύνθημα: om. b Devastating Cuman incursion into Macedonia. Alexios Angelos celebrates the weddings of his daughters to Alexios Palaiologos and Theodore Laskaris.

509/18-29 μετ' οὐ πολὺ δὲ καὶ Ἰβαγκὸς ἀφίσταται. οὗτος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὴν Φιλιππούπολιν πραγμάτων κύριος γεγονὼς φρούριά τε ἀνήγειρεν ἐν τόποις ἐπικαίροις καὶ τὸ ὑποκείμενον αὐτῷ ἐγγενὲς στράτευμα εἰς ἔργα διηρρένου ἀεὶ πολέμια: b The beginning of the rebellion of Ivanko, the Vlach governor of Philippopolis.

509/30-50 βασιλεὺς...πράγματα: οἱ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὸν βασιλέα τὰ παρὰ τοῦ Ἀλεξίου γινόμενα οὕτως ἐπήνουν μὲν καὶ ἀρίστως ἔλεγον δρᾶσθαι, οὐ μὴν δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ σκοπῷ συνοίσουντι Ῥωμαίοις γίνεσθαι. ὅθεν καὶ παρήνουν παραλῦσαι τῆς ἀρχῆς τὸν Ἀλέξιον· μηδὲ γὰρ ἂν ἄνδρα βάρβαρον μὴ πάνυ πρῶην Ῥωμαίοις πολεμιώτατον ἐς τὴν ἐναντίαν ἐξαίφνης μεταπεσεῖν διάθουσιν, εἰ μὴ τις αὐτῷ ἐνέσπαρτο ἔννοια τοῦ τυραννίδι ἐπιβαλεῖν, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ τὰ τινων ἐννοήματα φιλεῖν ὥς διὰ πυλῶν ἀεὶ τῶν χειλέων ἐκφέρεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ φωνῆς τρανότερον ὅσα κέκευθεν ἢ φρὴν τὰς πράξεις φαυλιζούσας ἀγγέλλειν. καὶ ὁ μὲν οὕτως. ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ἐχέγγυον εἰς πίστις τὸν τῆς υἱωνοῦ Θεοδώρας γάμον καθάπαξ ὑπολαβὼν οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως οὐκ ἀσφαλῆ τὰ πρὸς εὐνοίαν καὶ ἀπρόσκοπον ἔκρινε τὸν Ἀλέξιον: b The Byzantines suspect Ivanko. Condensed version of Alexios' reaction to the accusations against Ivanko.

512/89-6 καὶ...ἐς: ἐνέδρας αὐτὸς εἰργάσατο. ὁ τοίνυν πρωτοστράτωρ ἐκ τοῦ Βατραχοκάστρου εἰς: b Ivanko sets a trap for the Byzantines. Details in version a.

513/15-21 οὐκέτι...κατέλιπεν: om. b Ivanko captures all the towns and fortresses on the mountainous region of Haimos.

513/24-27 καὶ...έων: om. b Ivanko becomes master of the whole region and kills or ransoms the Byzantines inhabiting these parts.

513/31-514/36 ὡς...ὑπολήγοντος: om. b The emperor's reaction to the capture of the *protostrator*, Manuel Kamytzes.

515/59-64 καὶ...φήσι: οἱ μὲν ἔλεγον ἄφθαρτον καὶ ῥήμασιν ἀπέχρωντο τοῦ πνευματορρήτορος Κυρίλλου φάσκουσιν οὕτως “εἰ δὲ δεῖ τι καὶ τῶν μυστικῶν εἰπεῖν, κλείομεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰς θύρας, ἐπιφοιτᾷ δὲ καὶ

ἐποπτάνεται πάλιν ἡμῖν ὁ Χριστός, καὶ δίδωσι τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτοῦ ἀποθιγγάνειν. ὁμολογία γάρ τις ἐστὶ καὶ ἀνάμνησις τοῦ τεθνᾶναι καὶ ἀναβιῶναι δι' ἡμᾶς τὸν Κύριον ἢ τῶν θείων μυστηρίων μετάληψις.” καὶ αὐτὸς “μερίζεται γὰρ οἶονεῖ πως καὶ νῦν παρ' ἡμῶν, εἰ καὶ ἀμερίστως ἔχει τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ Λόγου περίβλημα” καὶ ὡς “ὁ ἂν τις μέρος δέξηται, ὅλον ἐκεῖνον δέχεται τὸν παρὰ τοῦ Θωμᾶ ψηλαφηθέντα,” καθὼς ὁ χρυσοῦς τὴν γλῶτταν Ἰωάννης πρὸς τοῖς ἐπομένοις φησὶν “ὅ τοῦ θαύματος, ὁ ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ πατρὸς καθήμενος ἐν ταῖς χέρσιν ἡμῶν βρίσκεται τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν” καὶ πάλιν “ἦνθησεν ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, ἠΰξησεν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις, ὠρίμασεν ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ, ἐσθίεται μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν” καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ὡς οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἐστὶν ἢ ἐκεῖνο τὸ σῶμα, ὁ τοῦ θανάτου κρεῖττον ἐδείχθη καὶ τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν προκατήρξατο· “καθάπερ γὰρ μικρὰ ζύμη, καθά φησιν ὁ ἀπόστολος, ὅλον τὸ φύραμα πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἐξομοιοῖ, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἀθανατισθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ σῶμα ἐν τῷ ἡμετέρῳ γενόμενον ὅλον πρὸς ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν τὸ πᾶν μετεποίησε.” ταῦτα δὴ τὰ τοῦ Νυσσαέων Γρηγορίου θεολογικώτατα ῥήματα: **Wb Longer discussion on theological controversy over the nature of the sacrament of the Eucharist (1197-1200) in version b.**

517/89-90 καὶ ὀδυνώμενον, ἐπεὶ: μηδὲ μὴν ὀδυνώμενον, ὡς εἶπερ ἐθελοκάκως τὸν ἀγνοοῦντα ἐσχηματίζοντο ἑτέραν εἶναι τὴν προληπτικὴν καὶ μυστικὴν νέκρωσιν καὶ ἀνάστασιν παρὰ τὴν πραγματικὴν ταφὴν τε καὶ ἀναβίωσιν, καὶ ἰσοδυναμῶσιν ἀμφότεραι καὶ ὡς μὲν ἀσυμβατεῖ τὸ παράπαν τοῖς σωματικῶς ἐνεργουμένοις καὶ ὀρωμένοις, ὥσπερ ἡ ἐν τῷ λουτρῷ τῆς παλιγενεσίας καθ' ὁμοίωμα τοῦ θανάτου Χριστοῦ ταφὴ καὶ ἀνάδυσις, καὶ ἡ τῶν θείων μυστηρίων ἐνέργεια εὐχὴ πρὸς θεὸν καὶ χάριτος οὐρανίας ἐπικλήσει καὶ ἐπελεύσει πληρούμεναι, ἡ δὲ μηδὲν ἔχουσα μυστηριῶδες ὁποῖα τις ἐστὶν ὁράται καὶ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς πρόκειται. ἀλλὰ δὴ: **b Niketas cites the arguments of those who believed in the corruptibility of the Eucharist.**

517/95 after νεκρῶν: ἀγνοία ἢ ἀνοία τὴν καθωμιλημένην δόξαν παρατρέχοντες, ἥτις φησὶ σῶμα διὰ σώματος μὴ χωρεῖν: **add. b; 95-1** τοιοῦτον...οὐδέν: ἐν μὲν οὖν τοῖς γραφεῖσιν οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ὅλως εὐρεῖν διακρινοῦν τὰ τοῦ δόγματος, ὁποῖως δὴ καὶ λελάληται: **b; 4** τινὲς δὲ τῆς φθαρτοδοξίας ταύτης διαλόγους ξυνθέμενοι σαθράς τινὰς προτάσεις προυβάλλοντο παρὰ τοῦ δῆθεν ἀντιθέτου μέρους προτεινομένας, αὐτοὶ πλασάμενοι ταύτας. ὅθεν καὶ

μάλα εὐμαρῶς μέρους ἀναλύοντες τὴν οἰκείαν ἐπικρατύνειν ὥοντο δόξαν· τοῦ Πονηροῦ καὶ τοῦτο εἰσήγημα, ὅς κατεψευσμένα ψιθυρίσας ἐς οὓς τῇ προμήτορι ὡς ἀπαλωτέραν αὐτὴν ὑπηγάγετο. ἀλλὰ πρὸς μὲν τὴν τοιαύτην πονηρὰν μεθοδείαν ἐκεῖνα τὰ Δαυιτικά τις ὑποφθέγγεται ἂν “ἀναστάντες μοι μάρτυρες ἄδικοι, ἃ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκον ἡρώτων με”: add. b More detailed discussion of theological controversy in b.

518/10-14 τοῖς...θρασύτητα: om. b The campaign against Ivanko resumes. The Byzantine troops assembled at Kypsella mock the emperor and brand him a coward.

518/15-18 τούς...μεθιστάμενος: παντοῖος ἐγίνετο καὶ τὸν ἀποστάτην Ἀλέξιον ἐς ξυμβάσεις προσκαλούμενος ἦν ὡς ὠκειωμένον αὐτῷ κατ' ἀγχιστείαν, μηδὲ τοῦ πολέμου παντάπασιν ἀμελῶν: b τοὺς αὐτῷ οἰκειοτάτους βιβλιοφόρους ἔπεμπε πρὸς Ἀλέξιον, ἐς ξυμβάσεις αὐτὸν προσκαλούμενος. ἔστι δ' ὅπη καὶ δολοφονίας ἐφρόντιζε, μηδὲ τοῦ πολέμου παντάπασι μεθιστάμενος: VAP Alexios Angelos plans to put an end to the rebellion of Ivanko.

518/22-519/33 ὁ...δέσμοις: μετὰ βραχὺ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Ἀλέξιον μεθ' ὄρκου καὶ ἁπάτης συνείληφε τὴν “μετὰ ὀσίου ὀσιος ἔση καὶ μετὰ στρεβλοῦ διαστρεψῆς” Δαυιτικὴν φωνὴν οὐχ ὡς ἐρρέθη ἐπηνεκῶς: b Shortened account of the capture of Ivanko.

519/44-520/69 τραπομένη...ἀμπεχόμενος: om. b Empress Euphrosyne becomes obsessed with the prognostication of the future. She takes part in various rituals, is devoted to the chase and does not hesitate to dismember statues throughout the city.

521/89-95 καὶ...διασκιδνάμενος: om. b Additional information on the civil strife among the sons of the Seljuk Sultan Kilij Arslan II (Masud, Qutb al-Din, Rukn al-Din and Kaykhusraw).

521/1-522/24 πρόσεισι...ἐπεοικυίας: ἐκεχειρίας οὖν ἀμφοτέροις ἐκ τῶν πολέμων γενομένης πρόσεισι Καιχοσρόης τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ φιλοφρονηθεὶς ἐπάνεισιν αὐθις εἰς Ἰκονίον. τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ὁ Μασοῦτ ἐς ἔπειτα πεποιήκει. ἀλλ' οὕπω καθαρῶς εἰσῆει τὸ Ἰκονίον Καιχοσρόης, καὶ τοῦ Ῥουκνατίνου κατ' αὐτοῦ ἐκστρατεύσαντος τῆς τε ἀρχῆς ἐκσφαιρίζεται καὶ φυγὰς εἰς

Ἀρμενίαν παρὰ Λεβούνην γίνεται. κάκειθεν μεταχωρεῖ πάλιν ἐς βασιλέα καὶ Ῥωμαίους συνῆν: b The Seljuk ruler Kaykhusraw finds refuge with Alexios Angelos. The account is more detailed in version a.

523/43-49 πλὴν...ὁρώμενοι: om. b Information on the civil strife among the Russians.

524/84-526/33 οὐ...δεύτερον: om. b The commander of the Praetorian prison, John Lagos is caught perpetrating robbery on a massive scale throughout Constantinople. His crimes go unpunished and the populace rises up in revolt against the emperor.

528/76-532/20 μετὰ...σπασάμενοι: om. b This long addition contains very damaging information on Alexios Angelos. Niketas starts off by relating that the body of the rebel John Komnenos ‘the fat’ was brutally exposed as food for dogs and birds, while his co-conspirators were tortured and imprisoned. Alexios Angelos sent Constantine Frangopoulos to plunder merchant ships in the Black sea. The Turkish merchants turned to Rukn al-Din for assistance, who immediately demanded compensation for the losses suffered by his merchants. The emperor denied any responsibility for these crimes and agreed to pay the compensation. A few days later, a conspiracy hatched by Alexios Angelos to assassinate the Seljuk sultan was discovered and thus the negotiations for a peace treaty that were under way at that time were suspended. Michael Komnenos Doukas rebelled in Asia Minor, but was defeated. He subsequently fled to Rukn al-Din. Meanwhile the emperor turned to astrology. Finally, Alexios’ daughter Eudokia, wife of the Serbian ruler, Stephan Nemanja, was charged with adultery and sent back to Byzantium as civil war broke out in Serbia.

533/42-62 καὶ...Πέλοπος: ἀλλ’ οἷα τὰ ἐπὶ τούτοις; ὁ πρωτοστράτωρ Μανουὴλ ὁ Καμύτζης ἐκ Μυσίας εἰς τὸν Πρόσακον ἄπεισι παρὰ τοῦ Χρύσου λυθείς, καὶ πρὸς ἀποστασίαν ἰδὼν σύναμα Χρύσῳ Πελαγονίαν χειροῦται καὶ ῥαδίως ὑπάγεται Πρίλαπον, ἐπιφύεται τοῖς ἐξῆς, ἀφιστᾷ τὰ πόρρωθεν, διεκπύπτει τῶν Θετταλικῶν Τεμπῶν, ἐπιλαμβάνεται τῶν πεδιάδων, τὴν Ἑλλάδα παρακινεῖ, παλίμβολον τίθησι τὴν τοῦ Πέλοπος: b Rebellion of Manuel Kamytzes and Drobomir Chrysos in Greece (1201).

534/73-535/2 ὁ...ἔξεπέρανεν: ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς καὶ τρίτῳ τότε κακῶ τῇ συνήθει τῶν ποδῶν καχεξία ἐτρύχετο. διχῇ τοίνυν διαιρεῖ τὸ στράτευμα καὶ τὸ μὲν τῷ γαμβρῷ παραδοὺς Ἀλεξίῳ τῷ Παλαιολόγῳ τὸν ἀνθρωπίσκον μετιόντι Σπυριδωνάκην, τὸ δὲ πρὸς τὸν Ἠονοπολίτην Ἰωάννην ἐκπέμψας τῷ πρωτοστράτορι ἀνθιστάμενον, κατατροποῦται καὶ ἀμφοτέρους τοὺς ἀποστάτας καὶ φυγάδας τίθησι. τότε δὲ καὶ τῆς Στρουμμίτζης τὸν Χρύσον ἀπώσατο: b Alexios deals successfully with the rebels Kamytzes, Chrysos and Spyridonakes (1202). More detailed and critical account in version a.

535/3 Title: τόμος τρίτος τῆς βασιλείας κῦρ Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ, ἔνθα ἡ διήγησις τῶν συμβάντων τῇ μεγαλοπόλει ἀνιαρῶν: b ἀπὸ τῶν ἐνταῦθα τὰ συμβάντα εἰς τὴν μεγαλόπολιν: AP ἐνταῦθα ἡ ἄλωσις τῆς πόλεως καὶ τινα τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα συμβάντων: LO

536/22-23 καὶ...ἔμεθόδευον: om. bLO Isaakios plans to overthrow Alexios III.

536/29-30 κατὰ...πατρός: om. LO Alexios IV follows his father's instructions to escape to the West.

537/51-53 μάλιστα δὲ μὴ ξυνέχοντες τὰ συλλεγόμενα χρήματα ἐξέφερον ἀμφοτέραις αὐτὰ: bLO μάλιστα δὲ φιλοχρηματίαν νοσοῦντες οὗτ' ἀπὸ δικαίων πόρων πλουτεῖν ἠνείχοντο: VAP The financial policies of the Angeloi.

537/57 εὔρεται...καθιστάμενοι: om. bLO The Angeloi invent new taxes.

540/29-37 οἷ...προϊέμενον: om. bPLO Alexios III fails to make preparations for the impending arrival of the fleet of the Fourth Crusade.

541/41-42 ναὶ μὴν καὶ ὁ τοῦ στόλου δούξ Μιχαὴλ ὁ Στρυφνός, κασιγνήτη τῆς δεσποίνης συνευγμένος, δεινότατος ὢν μὴ μόνον γόμφους καὶ ἀγκύρας νηῶν χρυσίου ἀλλάξασθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ λαίφεσιν ἐπίθεσθαι καὶ ἐξαργυρίσαι πρότονα ἀπαξάπαντος πλοίου μακροῦ τὰ νεώρια Ῥωμαίων ἐκένωσε. καὶ βασιλεὺς οἷς οὐκ ἐπετίμα τοῖς αβελτέροις τὰ τῶν κακῶν κάκιστα δρῶσιν ἐπευδοκῶν τοῖς γινομένοις ἠλίσκετο, μᾶλλον μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτός – χρεῶν γὰρ παρησθιάσασθαι τὴν ἀληθείαν – τὰ πολλὰ οἰκουρία

χαίρων, νῦν μὲν γεώλοφα καθήρει καὶ ἀνεπλήρου φάραγγας ἀλῶας αὐτουργῶν, νῦν δὲ εἰς ἐπιδείπνιον εἶχε γέλωτα τὴν τοῦ Λατινικοῦ στόλου ἀπόπλιαν καὶ ὡς εἰς μύθον ἀπέλυε τὰ τοῖς ὡσιν ἑναυλα δεινὰ καὶ πρὸ ὁμμάτων πολλοῖς κείμενα: add. PLO The *megas doux* of the fleet, Michael Stryphnos destroys the Byzantine warships, while the emperor remains inactive and occupies himself with various entertainments.

542/70-71 οὐδ' ἐπὶ βραχὺ προσέβαλεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ στρέψασα τὰ μετάφρενα τοῖς ἐπιδιώκειν ἐθέλουσιν, οἱ μὲν ἔπιπτον, οἱ δὲ ἔμελλον, οἱ δ' ἀνὰ κράτος ἐδραπέτευον, καὶ μάλιστα οἱ στρατηγοὶ ὡς καὶ δείλανδροι πλέον καὶ κραδέλαφοι. πῶς δ' ἂν καὶ συμβαλεῖν ἀνδράσιν ὑπήνεγκαν, οὓς ψυχάρπαγας ἀγγέλους καὶ χαλκηλάτους ἀνδριάντας οὐκ ὤκνουν καλεῖν, καὶ πρὸς τὴν αὐτῶν θέαν τῷ δέει ἐξέθνησκον: bPLO οὐδ' ὅλως προσέβαλε, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατ' αὐτῆς ἐπιόντων τῶν ἐναντίων ἀπανίσταται καὶ διασκίδναται: VA Description of the military encounter between the Byzantines and the Latins east of the Latin camp at Scutari (1 July, 1203).

544/9-12 ὁ...κικλήσκονται: om. bLO Alexios Angelos does not repulse the Latin attack because he already has plans to flee Constantinople.

544/19 καὶ μάλιστα ἡνίκα διεστρατήγει τὸν πόλεμον ὁ τοῦ βασιλέως γαμβρὸς Θεόδωρος ὁ Λάσκαρις· οὗτος γὰρ ῥαγδαιότερον συμπλεκόμενος εἶναι καὶ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις ἀρεϊκοὺς ἄνδρας τοῖς Λατίνοις ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἐξέφαινε: add. bPLO The emperor's son-in-law, Theodore Laskaris directs the war against the Latins.

545/50-546/80 ἰδὼν...ἄφειξιν: ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς τὸ οἰκτρὸν τοῦτο τῆς βασιλίδος δυστύχημα καὶ τὴν συνοχὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐλαβηθεῖς ὀπλίτης γίνεται μόλις, καὶ μάλισθ' ὅτι πρὸς ὀργὴν τοὺς πλείους ἐπιφρίσσοντας ἑώρα καὶ λόγους ἐπαχθεῖς ἀφιέντας, οἷς ἐπὶ μᾶλλον τὰ τῶν ἐναντίων φρονήματα ἤρετο, μηδεμιᾶς ἀρωγῆς ὑπονοθευομένη τῇ πόλει προσγινομένης ὡς εἶπερ οὐδένες τῶν ἐνόντων ἠπίσταντο πολεμεῖν, μηδὲ βέλτιον ἤδεσαν τὸ φθάσαι τὸν ἀντίπαλον μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ παρ' αὐτοῦ προληφθῆναι. ἐξιὼν τοίνυν τῶν ἀρχείων ἱππότας πλείστους πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπεσπάσατο καὶ πεζῇ τις φάλαγξ οὐκ ἀγεννῆς συνδεδράμηκεν ἐκ τῆς ἀκμῆς τῆς πόλεως, ὥστε καὶ τῷ κατὰ χέρσον πολεμίῳ στρατεύματι φρικασμὸς ἐπεγένετο σώματος,

μεγίστην αἰφνηδὸν θεασαμένῳ παράταξιν. τάχα δ' ἂν καὶ σωτήριον ἔργον διήνυστο, εἰ ὁμόσε κεχωρήκει τοῖς ἀντιπάλοις ἢ τῷ κηδεστῇ Λάσκαρι τὴν συμπλοκὴν συγκεχώρηκεν συμμῖξαι τοῖς Λατίνοις σφαδάζοντι. νῦν δὲ τὸ εὐπτόητον τοῦ στρατεύματος καὶ τὸ μὴ εὐθαρσὲς (τοῦ κρατοῦντος add. LO) καὶ φιλοκίνδυνον εἰς ἀτυχὲς πτώμα φερομένην τὴν πόλιν καὶ ὑπὲρ αἶσαν ἠφάντωσε καὶ τὸν ταύτης ἀποτεταμένον συνέτεμεν ὄλεθρον. οὐκοῦν καὶ παραταξάμενος μόνον πρὸς ἔνδειξιν τοῦ στρατευμάτος, ὅθεν ἐξήλθε Ῥωμαίοις ἀσπάσιος ὡς δήθεν μαχεσόμενος τοῖς Λατίνοις...εἰσιῶν οὖν Ἀλέξιος τὰ βασίλεια ἔγνω δεῖν μεθίστασθαι τῷ καιρῷ μηδὲ ταῖς ἀκμαῖς τῶν κινδύνων ἀντιβαίνειν ἐπισφαλῶς. οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ πρώτην φυλακὴν τῆς νυκτὸς τὸ Δεβελτὸν ἄπεισιν, ἔνθα τὴν οἰκείαν προητοιμάκει κατάλυσιν: bPLO The Byzantines encounter the Latin forces outside the land walls of the Constantinople (17 July, 1203). The emperor flees the city.

547/80-84 δείλαιος...ἀλλαξάμενος: om. bLO Harsh criticism of Alexios Angelos; 86-88 χαρίεις ὢν τὸ ἦθος, εὐῆλιξ καὶ ὀρθιος: bLO Description of the emperor

548/94-1 ἠνόμησε...ὅθεν: ἀέκοντι γε θυμῷ τὸν ὁμογνιον ἠδίκησεν: bLO Alexios was bothered by his conscience because he unwillingly wronged his brother.

Book XVII: Isaakios II and Alexios IV Angelos (July 1203- January 1204)

555/65-69 ὁ μὲν βασιλεὺς Ἰσαάκιος ἦχθετο, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἔς ὅσον εἰκός, ὁ δὲ τούτου υἱὸς Ἀλέξιος οὐχ ὅπως οὐκ ἐδυσχέραινε, ἀλλὰ καὶ συντελεσμὸν ἐπηύχετο τοῦ παντός, ὁ τῆς πατρίδος δαλός, ὁ τὴν ὄψιν φλογερός, καὶ διαχαράττων ἐντεῦθεν τὸν γραφικὸν πονηρὸν ἄγγελον: bPLO πρὸς τὰ δεινότατα ταῦτα συναντήματα ὃ τε βασιλεὺς Ἰσαάκιος καὶ ὁ τοῦτου υἱὸς Ἀλέξιος οὐχ ὅπως οὐκ ἐδυσχέραινον, ἀλλὰ καὶ συντελεσμὸν ἐπηύχοντο τοῦ παντός, οἱ τῆς πατρίδος δαλοί, οἱ τὴν ὄψιν φλογεροί, κἀντεῦθεν διαχαράττοντες τὸν γραφικὸν πονηρὸν ἄγγελον: VA Harsh criticism against Isaakios and Alexios Angelos.

556/80-81 καὶ...ἠνέσχετο: om. bLO Criticism of Alexios III; 84-86 ἐξιῶν...δραπετεύματι: om. bLO Alexios IV forces his uncle to flee Andrianople.

Book XVIII: Alexios V Doukas (January-April 1204)

570/38 μηδενὸς ὄντος τοῦ ἐπαρήξαντος, μάλλον δὲ καὶ καταπροδόντος τοῦ Πετραλήφα Ἰωάννου καὶ τῶν ἐκεῖσε παρατυχόντων Ἰγγλίνων: add. Q Blachernai is betrayed to the Latins by John Petraliphas and the Varangians.²

577/19-23 ἐῷ....ἀφήγησιν: bVPLO ἐποίησαν οἱ Λατίνοι μέλη διήγησιν ἔχοντα τῶν συμβάντων κακῶν τῇ πόλει: Q^{mg} The Latins composed songs about the capture of the city.

Book XIX: The Events after the Fall of Constantinople (1204-ca. 1208/9)

583/1-3 Title: τοῦ αὐτοῦ λογοθέτου τῶν σεκρέτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κρίσεων Νικήτα τοῦ Χωνιάτου ἱστορία τῶν μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν συμβάντων τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως: b τὰ μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν συμβάντα τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις: V τόμος δεύτερος: L^{mg} O^{mg}

583/4-585/57 Σόλων...ἐγώ: om. LO Niketas draws an analogy with ancient events in order to explain 1204.³

588/13-14 ἦν οὖν ἐμοί τις συνήθης καὶ συνέστιος ἐκ τοῦ τῶν Βενετικῶν προελθῶν γένους κομιδῆς ἀξιούμενος: VPb ἦν οὖν ἐκ τοῦ τῶν Βενετικῶν τις γένους, τὴν κλησιν Δομίνικος, συνήθης ἡμῖν καὶ ᾧ τότε συνέστιος πάσης κομιδῆς ἀξιούμενος: LO

589/39 ἔξιμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς μηδέν τι τῶν πρὸς δίαιταν καὶ στρωμνὴν ἐπαγόμενοι. ἦν δὲ τότε τὸ τοῦ Λαζάρου σάββατον: LO ἡμέρας τοίνυν πέντε μετὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν τῇ πόλει προσμείναντες ἀπαίρομεν καὶ ἡμεῖς. ἦν δὲ τότε σάββατον: VPb Niketas flees Constantinople.

² Manuscript Q (*Paris. Suppl. Gr.* 607) dated to the 13/14th centuries contains a fragment of Niketas' work from pp. 566/39-582/46. See van Dieten, *Historia*, pp. XXX-XXI.

³ Thereafter the sequence of LO is 585/58-603/23, 612/36-627/84, 631/17-636/65, 628/15-631/16, 605/65-608/50, 604/53-59, 608/50-611/35, 647ff. It should be noted that in ms.O there is a gap between 596/38-603/23 and 612/36-613/79.

592/28 καὶ φανέντες παρ' ἔθνεσι κιθάρα καὶ θρύλλημα, ἀδελφοὶ σειρήνων, ἑταῖροι στρουθῶν καὶ ψωμιζόμενοι μὲν ἀνάγκας, ὕδωρ δὲ χολῆς ποτιζόμενοι: add b Niketas bewails his fate as a refugee; 36 καὶ βαρύζηλα, ἐπενδυσόμεθα δ' αὖθις τοὺς ἐξ ὑφῆς στιλπνοτέρας καὶ περιβλέπτους καὶ χλιδῶντας χιτῶνας, οὓς πρῶην περιεκείμεθα: add b Niketas is forced to remove his splendid garments and put on rags.

598/83-92 οὐ...προτρέχοντα: om. L Latins boast of their courageous nature; 93-5 διελθὼν τοίνυν τὰς Θρακίας πόλεις καὶ κατὰ τὸ δοκοῦν ἐκείνῳ ταύτας καταστησάμενος ἀμαχεὶ προυχῶρει πρὸς τὴν τῶν Θεσσαλονικέων μητρόπολιν ἐφείπετο δὲ καὶ Βονιφάτιος ὁ μαρκέσιος: L Shortened account of the Latin emperor's advance through Thrace to Thessaloniki.

599/16-18 ἐπὶ...ὀπλόμαχον: om. L The Latin emperor Baldwin devastates the Thracian cities with the exception of Orestias 22-27 ταῦτα...ἀγήοχε: om. L To gain acceptance from the Byzantines, Boniface, the marquis of Montferrat proclaims Manuel, the son of his wife Margaret-Maria of Hungary with Isaakios Angelos, emperor; 32 ἀλλὰ τινι ἐνὶ τῷ καὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς ἄρξοντι τὴν ἐς τὴν πόλιν ἐπιτρέψαι εἴσοδον: add. L Entrance to Thessaloniki is granted to Baldwin; 32-40 δεδιέναι...χαριζόμενον: om. L Contrary to L, VPb relate that Baldwin was not allowed to enter Thessaloniki.

600/42-49 ἤδη...ἀηδές: om. L Dandolo recalls Baldwin and Boniface to Constantinople in order to achieve a reconciliation between the two; 51-57 καὶ...ἐνοίκησιν: om. L Boniface enters Thessaloniki and confiscates the wealth and dwellings of the inhabitants.

601/67-71 κατὰ...πράξιν: om. bLO Boniface and his supporters advance through Greece supposedly promoting the claim of Manuel who is paraded with the imperial vestments and acclaimed emperor by all; 75-83 ὁ...χείρωσιν: om. L Upon returning to Constantinople, Baldwin decides to campaign in Asia Minor.

602/87-6 ὁ μὲν Ἑρρῆς τοῖς περὶ Τροίαν συγγενόμενος Ἀρμενίοις καὶ συμαχίδας ἴλας ἐπαμνησάμενος καὶ τῆς Ἰδῆς τοῦ ὅρους κρατήσας διὰ τῶν

ταύτης στενωῶν παρήλθεν εἰς Ἀτραμύτιον, ὁ δὲ Πέτρος τὸ Ποιμανηνὸν διελθὼν ἐς τὸ περὶ τὸν Ῥυνδακὸν ποταμὸν ἀφίκνεται φρούριον. Πονηρὸν δὲ εἰς θεραπείαν χρῆμα Λατίνοις, φωνὴ ἀσύμφωνος Ἑλληνι, γνώμη φιλοχρήματος, ὀφθαλμὸς ἀπαιδαγώγητος, γαστήρ ἄπλητος...: L The battle of Poimanenon (1204) is omitted.

602/7 ὅθεν καὶ πράως ἐνιαχοῦ τοῖς ὑπείκουσι Ῥωμαίοις προσεφέροντο, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦν χρόνιον τὸ καλὸν, ἐπίπλαστον δὲ καὶ πρόσκαιρον καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἐκ γνώμης ἐπανιὸν: add. LO In the beginning the Latins treat their Byzantine subjects well, but this does not last long.

603/30 τῶν γὰρ Ῥωμαίων τινὲς τὸν ἐπὶ τῆς σημαίας ἀνελόντες, ἥτις προηγεῖτο τοῦ Λατίνων στρατεύματος, καὶ ταύτην ἐπὶ γηλόφου στήσαντες καθ' ἑαυτῶν ἐπεσπάσαντο τὰ μεθεπόμενα τάγματα, πρὸς μὲν τὸ ποδηγὸν σημεῖον τραπόμενα, κατὰ δ' ἐκείνων, ὡς ἔγνωσαν Ῥωμαίους ὄντας, τραπόμενα καὶ τάχιστα καὶ ῥᾶστα τούτους τρεψάμενα καὶ κακῶς διαθέμενα: add. b Additional information on the war of the Prouseans against the Latins.

609/79-81 καὶ...πολλῶν: om. LO The inhabitants of Greece readily submit to Boniface despite the fact that his army was small and his troops recruited from many different places.

610/92-95 καὶ...ἐπισχήσουσαν: om. LO On the treacherous nature of the Euboians.

611/26-35 ὁ δὲ δὴ Σγουρός (δοτέον γὰρ τὰ κατὰ τοῦτον τῇ ἱστορίᾳ) καὶ ἔτι ἐπὶ βραχὺ ἠπορηκῶς ἐπὶ πᾶσι τῶν Λατίνων κατειληφόντων τὴν Πελοπόννησον καὶ τὸ Ἄργος ὁρῶν ἐχόμενον καὶ τὰς περιοικίδας πόλεις συνειλημμένας, ὡς ἐς ἄντρον λάσιος θῆρ ὁ λεοντώνυμος ἐκεῖνος τὸν Ἀκροκόρινθον εἴσεισιν. ὁ δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ τῆς πάλαι πόλεως Κορίνθου ἀκρόπολις, ἐπ' ἀνάντους ὄρους κειμένη καὶ δυσάλωτος τοῖς προσβάλλουσιν, ἔτι γε μὴν καὶ ὡς ἐς χεῖαν ὄφεις συσπειράται τὸ Ναύπλιον· ἀπηνεία δὲ καὶ μιᾷ φονίᾳ χαίρων καὶ τὴν αὐτὸν γειναμένην ὑπέβαλε μαστιγώσεσι, καὶ τὸν πρόεδρον τῆς Κορίνθου Νικόλαον μνήμην λαβὼν διαφορῶν παλαιτέρων καὶ διενέξεων πρῶτα μὲν τοῦ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν φάους ἀποστειρεῖ, εἶτα καὶ κάτω βάλλει κατὰ κρημνῶν καὶ τοῦ ζῆν βιαίως ἐξίστην. ὡς δὲ μετὰ καιρὸν

έτεθνήκει, έγκρατεῖς παρὰ δόξαν Λατῖνοι καὶ τοῦ Ἀκροκορίνθου γίνονται. τῷ τοι καὶ ἡ τούτου σύζυγος φαμένη χαίρειν ταῖς ἐκεῖσε διατριβαῖς ἐς τὴν ἔω διαπλῶίζεται. καὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὡς ἱστὸς ἐπ' ὄρους καὶ σημαία ἐπὶ βουνοῦ τὸ Ναύπλιον παρὰ τινος Γαβριήλ, κασιγνήτου τοῦ Σγουροῦ, κατεχόμενον, ὥσπερ καὶ ἡ κοίλη Λακεδαίμων παρὰ Χαμαρέτου τινὸς Λάκωνος. τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντα Λατίνοις καὶ τοῖς τούτων θεσμοῖς ὑπεῖκουσι καθ' ὁρμὴν μίαν καὶ ἀμαχεὶ προσρύντα: LO Niketas narrates the activities Leo Sgouros and provides us with the additional information that Sgouros died in Akrokorinth. Thereafter his wife was sent to Nicaea and his brother Gabriel took control of Nauplion.

612/41-45 ὁ γὰρ βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξιος τῷ μαρκεσίῳ εἰς ὄψιν ἐλθὼν ἄρτου μετρητοῦ καὶ κοτύλης κεράσματος τὰ τῆς βασιλείας οὐχ ἐκὼν ἀνταλλάσσεται σύμβολα καὶ εἰς χῶρον τῇ τύχῃ φερώνυμον (Ἀλμυρὸς δ' ὁ χῶρος κικλήσεται) τὰς διατριβάς τελέσων ἐκπεμπεται σὺν Εὐφροσύνῃ τῇ ὁμευνέτιδι: b ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξιος τῷ μαρκεσίῳ μεθ' ὄρκων εἰς ὄψιν ἐλθὼν οὔτε τοῦ γένους καὶ τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἀρχῆς, ἥς ἐξέπεσεν, ἀξίως προσδέχεται. μᾶλλον μὲν οὖν καὶ τοὺς πρὸς αὐτὸν ὄρκους τοῦ μαρκεσίου ἀθετήσαντος εἰς Λαμπαρδίαν ὡς εἷς τῶν δορικτῆτων ἀπάγεται: L Alexios III Angelos meets with Boniface of Montferrat.

614/7-10 οὐδὲ...κρησφύγετον: ἡ δὲ λοιπὴ ἐς τὴν Ἀδριανοῦ παρὰ πόδας ἰοῦσα ἐκεῖσέ πη βάλλει στρατήγιον καὶ ταυτηνὶ πειράται κατὰ κράτος ἐλεῖν. ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἀπείρηκα τὰς τῶν οἰκείων συμφορὰς συγγραφόμενος, ἤδη δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐς ἔω μεταβάσεως ἅπας γίνομαι, ἐνταῦθα τοῦ λέγειν σχάσας τοῦ τῶν κακῶν ἰλίγγου πεπαύσομαι: b End of version b.

617/77-86 Ῥωμαῖοι...θεώμενοι: om. LO The Byzantines who remained in Constantinople became afraid of the continual warfare and those who fled to Selymbria had to endure the Cuman raids; 86-87 τῇ Σηλυμβρία μέντοι καταλύσαντες ξιφῆρεις τὰς ἡμῶν ἀγκαλίδας καὶ τὰ ῥάκια διηρπάζον ἀπειλοῦντες καὶ ἡμῖν θάνατον: LO The invaders threaten of the inhabitants of Selymbria (including Niketas himself) and loot their possessions; 88-92 δεκάς...κατηγωνίσθησαν: om. LO Niketas dates of Cuman victory over the Latins (15 April, 1205).

618/14-619/43 ἐκ δὲ Θράκης ἐς Σέρρας ὁ Ἰωάννης παραγενόμενος καθὼς εἶχε Βλαχικοῦ στρατοῦ καὶ τῶν Σκυθικῶν δυνάμεων καὶ συμβαλὼν τοῖς ἐκεῖ Λατίνοις κατὰ κράτος αὐτοὺς ἐτροπώσατο καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἠθάλωσε πυρί. καὶ οὕτως εἰς Μυσίαν ὑπέστρεψεν: LO Shortened account of Ioannitsa's defeat of the Latins and the capture of Serrai (1205). The information that the city was torched is given only in LO.

619/44-620/70 ἀλλ'...θεάματος: ὁ μέντοι μαρκέσιος ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐπανεικῶς καὶ τῆς νήσου τοῦ Πέλοπος καὶ τοὺς Θεσσαλονικεῖς εὐρῶν ἐπαναστάντας τῇ αὐτοῦ ὁμευνέτιδι, οὐκ ὀλίγους μὲν ἀπέκτεινεν, ἐνίους δὲ καὶ ἀνεσκολόπισεν, ὧν εἷς ἦν ὁ χαρτοφύλαξ τῆς μητροπόλεως, τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς ἐς χρήματα ἐζημίωσε, καὶ ταῦτα ὑπέραντλα καὶ τὴν τῶν αἰτουμένων ἰσχὺν ὑπερβαίνοντα: LO Boniface hastens to return to Thessaloniki because of a rebellion there. This is a condensed version, but it does offer information not found in VP.

620/71-621/5 ταῖς...ἀνύποιστα: om. LO Boniface attempts to assist his compatriots against Ioannitsa, but is unsuccessful. The Latin leaders in Constantinople retaliate against the Byzantines and the Vlachs.

623/66-626/75 ἀλλὰ...ἐπίσημοι: om. LO The Latins withdraw from Asia Minor and concentrate their efforts on the war with the Byzantines and the Vlachs in Thrace. In the east three separate leaders emerge, Manuel Mavrozomes, Theodore Laskaris and David Komnenos.

627/85-628/14 ἦν...διαφίησι: om. LO Detailed narration of the capture of Philippopolis by Ioannitsa (1205). The Vlacho-Bulgarian leader turns against the Byzantines.

631/16ff καὶ τῇδε μὲν ταῦτα ἐφέρετο. τὰ δὲ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐπὶ τούτοις οἷα; πάντες ὑπέκυπτον, πάντες ἐδουλοῦντο τοῖς κείρουσιν αὐτοὺς ἔθνεσιν ἄνευ τινῶν τῶν ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίους μερῶν. ὁ γὰρ Θεόδωρος Λάσκαρις κηδεστής ὢν ἐπὶ θυγατρὶ τοῦ ἐξ Ἀγγέλων βασιλεύοντος Ἀλεξίου τὰς πρὸς ἑω περιέθαλπε πόλεις ἐκτρίβων πρὸς πόλεμον καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῶν βασιλεὺς

ἀναγορευόμενος. καὶ ἄλλος δέ τις ἐξ ὁσφύος φύς Ἰωάννου τοῦ σεβαστοκράτορος, ὅστις θεῖος ἦν πρὸς πατρός Ἰσαακίου καὶ Ἀλεξίου τῶν ὁμογνίων αὐτοκρατόρων Ῥωμαίων, τὰ περὶ Νικόπολιν χειρίζων καὶ τὸν ποταμὸν Ἀχελῶον, οὐδὲ οὗτος ἀγεννῶς ἀντεφέρετο τοῖς Λατίνοις ἀλλὰ καὶ μάλα γενναίως, καταχθεῖσιν εἰς τὸ Δυρράχιον καὶ χωρούσιν ἐς τὰ πρόσω· πῇ μὲν σπάνει τῶν ἀναγκαίων, πῇ δὲ καὶ ἐνωπίῳ μάχῃ τὴν νίκην λαμπρὰν ἀνεδήσατο καὶ πολλὰς κατηγωνίσαστο χιλιάδας, ὅσας ὁ Σαισοῦ ἐπίσκοπος ἐξ Ἰταλίας στρατολογήσας καὶ τῶν ὅπῃ δὴ Λατινικῶν μερῶν συλλεξάμενος εἰς τὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ὄρια διεπλώϊσατο: LO Niketas discusses the leaders of the Byzantine resistance. Theodore Laskaris is proclaimed emperor in the eastern provinces. Michael Komnenos Doukas becomes leader of Epiros and annihilates Latin reinforcements sent from Italy near Dyrrachion (1207/8).

633/60-66 οἱ....κατειλήφασι: om. LO The Latins respond to Byzantine calls of assistance from Orestias and Didymoteichon, which are threatened by Ioannitsa.

634/67 τοιαῦτα δὲ ἦν τὰ ὑπὸ Σκυθῶν καὶ Βλάχων (καὶ παρὰ Λατίνων LO): VPLO Niketas laments the destruction of the Thracian cities by the enemy; 83-89 πόθεν....ἀνειγυρόμενα: om. LO Niketas laments his own misfortune at having to narrate these dreadful events.

635/7-636/65 διὰ ταῦτα τοίνυν τὴν Σηλύβριαν παρειαυότες ἡμεῖς τὴν Κωνσταντίνου εἰσέδμεν, καὶ μῆνας ἔξ ἐν αὐτῇ διατρίψαντες ἐς τὴν ἑῴαν γῆν διαπλωϊζόμεθα, τὴν Λατινικὴν ἅμα θέαν καὶ κόρυζαν ἐκτρεπόμενοι. ὅθεν καὶ παροικοῦμεν ἐν τῇ κατὰ τὴν λίμνην τὴν Ἀσκανίαν Νικαίᾳ τῆς τῶν Βιθυνῶν ἐπαρχίας προεδρεύουσι καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίους ἀπάσων ἑῴων πόλεων τὸ πρωτιστεύειν ὑπεζῶσθαι τῇ τῶν τειχῶν ὀχυρότητι κομπαζούσῃ. πλὴν οὐδὲν ἄμεινον τὰ τῆς τοπικῆς ταυτησὶ μεταβάσεως τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς εἰσὴνεγκαν πράγμασιν, ἀλλ' ἐσμέν καὶ πάλιν ταῖς λύπαις ὑπέραντλοι καὶ μόνῳ διεξαγόμεθα θεῷ βραχείας τῆς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων εὐμοιροῦντες συνάρσεως (μηδὲ τῆς ἐκ βασιλέως ἀμοιροῦντες συνάρσεως O), ἀηδοῦς καὶ ταύτης διὰ τὸ μὴ τοὺς δότας ἰλαροὺς εἶναι, εἰπεῖν δὲ καὶ ἀναρσίους πρὸς τὴν συμβίωσιν...: add. LO This is the longest addition found in LO. Niketas begins by describing his own personal misfortune as a refugee, first in Selymbria and then in Nicaea. The narrative of events then resumes with the siege of Andrianople by Ioannitsa. The Vlacho-Bulgarian leader lifts the siege and proceeds to ravage the

surrounding provinces. At Mosynopolis, he engages the Latins in battle. During the battle, Boniface of Montferrat is mortally wounded and the administration of his territories passes to the regent, Margaret-Maria of Hungary (1207). This event is only related in LO.

637/8-646/11 ἦσαν...κατέλαβεν: om. LO Description of political conditions in the eastern and western provinces. Theodore Laskaris struggles against David Komnenos and his Latin allies (ca. 1206). Henry of Flanders is made emperor in Constantinople (20 August, 1206). Then follows a description of the death of Baldwin of Flanders and destruction of the statue at Forum Tauri by the Latins. Criticism of the Byzantine people and their lack of resistance. Henry of Flanders campaigns in Thrace.

647/ Title: τοῦ αὐτοῦ μακαρίτου κύρ Νικήτα τοῦ Χωνειάτου ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἱστορίας τῆς περὶ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως: V This final section of the text, conventionally known as *De Statuis*, is contained in LO, V and Z.⁴

647/1-3 ἵνα δὲ μὴ μακροτέρα τῇ ἱστορία χρώμενοι πολυπλοκωτέρας ἐντεῦθεν τὰς λύπας κτώμεθα, ταυτὶ μὲν παρήσομεν, ἐκεῖνα δ' ἐν ἐπιτομῇ τῷ λόγῳ δώσομεν: om. VZ.

⁴ Manuscript Z (*Marc. gr.* XI 22) of the fourteenth century contains the so-called fragment *De Statuis* of Niketas' historical work. See van Dieten, *Historia*, pp. LIII-LIV.

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